Robert Worth on saving the inner city

The Washington Monthly

Alexandra Starr on getting Latinas off welfare, and Frank Levy on why growth is not enough

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Letters

Our Story

In the January/February edition, Charles Peters, in his "Tilting at Windmills" column, cites a *Washington Post* report on underreporting of crime in Philadelphia.

For the record: The *Post* report was a summary of investigative disclosures by *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, which, in a series of articles over the last year, brought to light a longstanding Police Department practice of "downgrading" crimes to make the city's crime statistics look better.

The *Inquirer* reports prompted numerous changes, including an overhaul of incident reporting procedures in Philadelphia and the creation by Police Commissioner John F. Timoney of an independent panel to audit the department's crime figures and help him ferret out fakery.

MARC DUVOISIN
CITY EDITOR
THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER
Philadelphia, PA

Shut Out

I enjoyed the "Tilting at Windmills" piece on social workers in welfare (March 1999) and was pleased that someone understands the contributions our profession can make.

It wasn't so much disillusionment that drove the social workers from eligibility work, though. The implementation of the 1968 amendments to the Social Security Act specifically required the separation of "eligibility" from "services" such as foster care and adoption. Eligibility workers could be clerks with high school level education. Social workers were to be used for services programs.

Before then, the strategy was to assign all welfare applicants to trained social workers who could help them overcome their poverty through collecting child support, marriage, and work. Social workers were eliminated from the process—they didn't simply withdraw.

LEON GINSBERG,
Professor, College of Social Work,
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC

Code Blue

At about 4 a.m. last night I finished reading Robert Worth's disturbing article "Exhaustion That Kills" (January/February 1999). I was awake at this hour because my girlfriend, a third-year medical student, was up preparing to go to the hospital for work. She will be home tomorrow evening.

It is in their third year as medical students that our future doctors begin hospital rotations and start keeping outrageous hours. Shifts are long, sleep is infrequent, and though such hours may lead to more teaching time, the result is that students hardly care about patients. I know my girlfriend is more concerned with getting even a modicum of sleep than with actually taking care of her patients. If this is the attitude we are instilling in young, impressionable students, it does not bode well for our medical systems. Thanks to Robert Worth for addressing this troubling issue.

THADDEUS MCBRIDE
Brookline, MA

I sought in vain for some mention of the changes in nursing staffing of hospitals as a major factor in the difficulties of residents experiencing horrendous exhaustion in Robert Worth's "Exhaustion that Kills" (January/February 1999). Worth does not take into account the fact that well-prepared nurses in emergency rooms, operating rooms, intensive care units, and step-down units of hospitals can mitigate problems for physicians caring for patients. Nurse practitioners and advanced practice nurses in many specialty areas have been introduced to hospital tertiary care practice to mitigate the problems faced by residents. However, many highly prepared nurses have been let go.

Colleagues and I are hearing from nurses who tell us they are dealing with ratios of one RN to ten patients on the day shift, one to fifteen, or even one to twenty on some shifts. According to a study conducted by The American Hospital Association, three-quarters of all American hospitals are restructuring, which, in most cases, means they are laying off nurses. A 1996 report in *Modern Healthcare* noted that "from 1993 through January of 1996, 140 hospitals or systems laid off a total of 23,910 workers, or an average layoff of 171 workers per hospital." Another article carried the results of a survey of hospital administrators. Most said they would cut their staff to save money rather than limit research and development.

In 1994, when the American Nurses Association surveyed its members, 70 percent of all respondents said their employers were cutting back on staffing by leaving vacant positions unfilled. In many instances, nurses have been replaced by unlicensed assisting personnel. While these folks can be very helpful assisting nurses, it is hard to imagine them providing the backup that young physicians need.

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You Try It

Having been a member of academe for some 40 years, I have been interested in Charles Peters' drive to promote more teaching by top professors at elite universities, especially at the undergraduate level ("Tilting at Windmills," January/February 1999).

First let me raise the question: what is the primary function of a university? My answer is fairly classical. It is to create and disseminate knowledge. Peters' contention seems to be that the elite institutions are more interested in the creation of knowledge. I certainly agree. The reason for this ought to be clear. The primary function of almost all our American universities is no longer to do research and teaching, but to make money in order to pay administrators, who neither do research nor teach, top salaries. Funding a substantial research program is much more effective. It brings in

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money in the form of both government and private grants.

There is another factor which accounts for imbalance. Undergraduate teaching can be quite unrewarding. Consider the numbers of unqualified and unmotivated students, especially at larger state universities that face pressure to keep enrollments up. The presence of such students results in grade inflation. Should professors at such schools be expected to teach remedial level subjects and still be expected to contribute to the expansion of knowledge?

GEORGE SEIFERT
PROFESSOR EMERITUS
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Ames, IA

Poll Tyranny

Suzannah Lessard's contribution to "Just the Facts" (January/February 1999) reminded me of another Lessard contribution to the *Monthly* on the place of polls in political processes. It is reasonable to argue that if polls did not exist, the tenure of William Clinton as President of the United States may have been in greater jeopardy.

There is a curious side to polls, questions that are never openly discussed. Polls determine what we, the public, see and hear of things beyond our mundane reach. Polls are used to decide what we think, read, drink, eat, and whom we elect.

Who will dare ask: Who are we, the sampled ones? Who determines the portion of us within a sample who contribute judgment, and who among us are the muddled masses, or simply damn fools? No one with a product to sell, a story to write, or an election to win can afford to alienate us, nor can we be neglected. In public we are only a number.

Those of us to be sampled deserve to know more about the art, science and practice of polling, and how we are truly evaluated and used by sponsors in a given poll.

I began to read the *Monthly* without interruption 30 years ago. I met "Suki" Lessard shortly thereafter when she interviewed me. Since then, Ms. Lessard and the *Monthly* have come a long way. My hearty congratulations and humble thanks to both. I would like to hear more from her about how polls affect our destiny.

KEITH W. BOSE, SR.
Kings Park, NY

On the Case

Robert Weissman's "Dusty Death" (January/February 1999) presented a well-written history of the struggle against black lung disease—up to a point. On the current state of the struggle, three additional points deserve mention.

First: Today, our nation's coal mines have the toughest federal oversight ever of respirable dust levels. The Mine Safety and Health Administratioin (MSHA) has stepped up its dust sampling inspections to at least four a year in underground coal mines and two a year in surface coal mines—more in some mines. This supplements sampling by mine operators six times a year.

Second: The federal government continues to prosecute fraudulent dust sampling by coal mine operators. In November 1998, for instance, Fred and Mark Dotson of ABM Coal Company pleaded guilty in U.S. District court to creating false coal mine samples in a supply room at the No. 1 Mine, near Mary Alice in Harlan County, Ky, and supplying those samples to MSHA as valid samples. The Dotsons were numbers 165 and 166 in the count of guilty pleas and convictions for coal mine dust sampling fraud since fiscal year 1991.

Third: Since 1994, MSHA has undertaken a multifaceted campaign to end black lung. In 1996, an advisory committee—from labor, the mining industry, and the academic community—concluded after coalfield hearings that we need to reform the whole federal program for monitoring and controlling respirable dust. The committee gave us 20 major recommendations including about 100 action steps, many of which we have taken or are now taking.

J. DAVID MCATEER
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The Washington Monthly

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

Troops to Teachers • Lawmakers to Lobbyists • Ivy League Cops • Precocious Campaign Contributors • Remembering Sir Anthony

TROOPS TO TEACHERS IS A PENTAGON program begun in 1994 to encourage military retirees to become public school teachers. It has put more than 3,000 former servicemen into classrooms in 800 school districts in every state but Iowa. Research by the National Center for Education Information shows that the military veterans are doing a good job. According to Lisa Hoffman of Scripps Howard News Service, they are "motivated by a sense of public service and possessed of positive, can-do attitudes [with] expertise in math and science—areas for which there has been a chronic shortage of teachers."

Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? Yet when Bill Clinton on Jan. 21 honored a retired sergeant who has participated in the program and announced a plan to commit $18 million to it, *The New York Times* didn't come close to dealing with the matter until the 22nd paragraph of its White House story. And even then it didn't get very close. The only hint came with these words: "Introduced by Arthur Moore, a soldier turned teacher, Mr. Clinton ..." Not another word about the program. The first 21 paragraphs of the article described and analyzed Clinton's political strategy "of a free-swinging legal defense and daily policy announcements."

This is what has happened to Washington journalism. It's all about inside skinny on tactics, strategy, and process without enough substance for the reader to know what the substance is.

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WEST VIRGINIA STATE LOTTERY officials are, reports *The Charleston Gazette*, setting up "an outreach program for players whose gambling gets out of control." Wouldn't it be better for the state not to sponsor the lottery that contributes to the problem?

••••••••

Republicans suspect that Bill Clinton is trying to sneak national health care in piecemeal. I hope they're right.

ONE OF THE CRAZIEST ASPECTS of the present economic boom is that it seems to be dependent on consumer overspending. Instead of saving, as our mother and father taught us to do, we've got to max out our credit cards. "Low personal saving is an essential catalyst of the present boom," writes Robert J. Samuelson. "If saving somehow were to rise, the American and world economies would face even greater peril." Much of the wealth we're spending is based on the price of stocks, whose value may be less intrinsic than a product of short supply, with too much money chasing too few available shares in the same companies. As long as the stock market keeps rising, our wealth increases so that we have more money to spend even though we haven't been saving. Doesn't this make you feel just a tad queasy?

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IS THERE A DANGER THAT A government agency, in an effort to reinvent itself, will lose sight of its essential function? In the case of the Internal Revenue Service, at least, the answer appears to be yes. Faced with criticism of its occasionally harsh treatment of taxpayers, the agency recently issued a new mission statement that emphasizes fairness and service but does not even mention collecting taxes.

••••••••

SIR ANTHONY NUTTING'S recent death reminded me of one of the most painful moments in English history—Britain's involvement in the 1956 attack on Suez. This shameful event occurred just as the world was rallying around Hungary's effort to free itself from Soviet domination and gave the Russians an excuse to reinvade Hungary. After all, they were merely asserting their imperial rights just as the Brits were doing by trying to retake Suez.

But it ruined Sir Anthony's life. He opposed the attack and resigned from the government in which he had been serving as deputy foreign secretary. The resignation ended a career that had been so promising that Harold Macmillan had told him "You will lead the party one day."

He did not explain his resignation at the time, believing that to do so would be disloyal to his colleagues. He later wrote, according to his obituary in *The Times*, of

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feeling "bereft of friends, a castaway adrift on a sea of anger and recrimination, an object of distrust, torn between loyalty to principle and loyalty to friends and associates." I wish he had gone public with his misgivings, as I wish our own in-government dissenters had done during the Vietnam War. If people like George Ball, Bill Moyers, and Robert McNamara had expressed their misgivings about the war when they left the Johnson administration I'm convinced that the war would have ended sooner. Similarly, public discussion of the wisdom of the Suez invasion before it occurred would surely have exposed the lunacy of that misbegotten venture.

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MORE EVIDENCE THAT WE NEED not less but smarter, tougher regulation comes from the case of the Ball Park frankfurters. Last summer 11 people were killed by Ball Park franks tainted with listeria. The government requires that meat be free of listeria. The problem is that the Department of Agriculture conducts what *The Los Angeles Times* describes as "only limited random testing for the bacteria." The result is that Ball Park franks not only killed 11 people but sickened 70 others and caused five miscarriages. And these were only the people the Center for Disease Control and Prevention were able to track down.

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DID YOU SEE THE STORY IN THE *New York Times* about the Ivy Leaguers who had chosen to work in the New York City Police Department? They weren't at the bottom of the class, either. One, Adam Kasanof, had an SAT score of 1410; another, Christopher Schmidt, had a 3.4 grade point average. Both, I'm delighted to say, attended my alma mater, Columbia. A plainclothes officer in the Bronx went to Harvard. A 67th precinct detective has a masters degree from New York University. The famous whistle-blowing lieutenant, David Durk, was an Amherst graduate.

These men are not bored with their jobs. They don't feel the work is beneath them. Actually they have found, according to the *Times*, "that they were often envied by their college classmates as people of action who are not shackled to a desk." I hope more of their classmates will join them not only in the interest of better police work but for their own sake. The police need bright people. And more of our intellectual elite need to discover the rewards of jobs that count.

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I FOUND A SOULMATE IN THE Maryland legislature. He is Del. John S. Arnick, who has introduced a bill to ban the use of hand-held cell phones by motorists. He noted that on a recent auto trip from Baltimore to Annapolis he had counted more than 30 drivers talking into these infernal devices. "It is a risk and it causes a danger." Amen.

••••••••

THE JUDGES WHO TELL THE rest of us we must obey the rules seem to have difficulty following them themselves, at least when it comes to hiring clerks. Two thousand federal judges annually bend rules to the point of outright cheating in their rush to get top law school graduates. The judges are supposed to wait until March 1 to hire next year's graduates. But the rule was rescinded because it was being so widely flouted. Offers were being made to top students who were barely beginning their second year of law school. Earlier attempts to get judges to behave had also failed. Back in 1990 there was an effort to prevent offers before noon on May 1. But, reports *The Washington Post*'s Michael Grunwald, a judge who called a candidate promptly at noon found that he had already accepted a take-it-or-leave-it offer from another judge with a faster watch.

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8,876 STUDENTS MADE CAMpaign contributions from 1991 to 1998. Is this a heartening proof of American youth's commitment to participation in public life? Perhaps, but when one learns from *The Los Angeles Times* that 163 gave more than $5,000 and that the thousand dollar contributors included Skye Stolnitz (age 10), Asher Simon and Benjamin Lipman (both age 9), and Elizabeth Heyman (age 7), suspicion begins to stir. Are these children that precocious or is there the faintest possibility that their parents are using them to evade contribution limits? Mommy and Daddy have given all they can give, so junior finds himself with a substantial boost in allowance accompanied by a warm parental endorsement of a deserving candidate, and a stamped envelop addressed to the campaign treasurer.

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THE MARINE CORPS IS AN exception to the current decline in military recruiting. Although the Air Force, Army, and Navy continue to have shortfalls, the Marines have met or exceeded their goals for 43 consecutive months, according to Rowan Scarborough of *The Washington Times*. Marine spokesmen attribute the success to their reliance on traditional values, "patriotism, professionalism, and dedication to country." My own guess is that it's the corps' reputation for testing for the right stuff and certifying that you've got what it takes.

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MORE THAN 125 FORMER members of Congress are now lobbyists, according to *The Hill*. Those who retired in January are being courted by trade associations, corporations, interest groups, and influence-peddling law firms. Gerard Solomon says he

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received six offers with "unbelievable salaries." According to *The Hill*, high-profile members expect to at least double their salary. One can't help wondering whether some members, while serving in Congress, allow their stands on issues to be affected by the desire to curry favor with those who might lighten their retirement with these lucrative lobbying jobs.

••••••••

BETWEEN 1900 AND 1975 THIS country had an average of 110 prison inmates for every 100,000 people. Today the figure is 445 per 100,000. In other words, it has quadrupled in just slightly more than twenty years. The $35 billion a year we spend on prisons has produced what Eric Schlosser of *The Atlantic Monthly* calls "the Prison-Industrial Complex." Aficionados of the military-industrial complex will be interested to learn that one of its leading players during the Vietnam War, Brown & Root, is a big winner in the new game, building prisons instead of military bases. Mandatory sentencing laws could turn out to be the prisons' Gulf of Tonkin resolution.

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O.J. SIMPSON VERDICTS ARE increasing. There's an emerging pattern of jury defiance, reports *The Washington Post*, with jurors choosing to send a message instead of basing their verdict on the facts and the law. The most convincing evidence of this trend is the increase in the number of hung juries. For many years, hung juries ran around 5 percent of all verdicts. But in federal criminal cases in Washington, D.C., that figure rose to 15 percent between 1991 and 1996. There are courts in California where the figure is more than 20 percent.

There is, to be sure, a measure of poetic justice in all this. Many of today's examples of juror defiance involve blacks siding with blacks, and, of course, the last great era of juror nullification was in the South when white jurors sided with whites against blacks. But, however understandable history may make it, jury nullification is not a trend to be welcomed. I wrote in our last issue about how the jury system had been one of the bedrocks of my faith in democracy, along with the democratic schools in my hometown and the democratically drafted army in which I served in World War II. Now that we don't have a democratic draft or in many cases democratic schools, preservation of the great tradition of the democratic jury is all the more important. In the dozen or so cases in which I was involved as a lawyer, the jury always came up with the right verdict. My father, who practiced law for almost fifty years, had a similar experience.

Washington journalism is about inside skinny on tactics, without enough substance for the reader to know what the substance is.

One reason juries worked was that they represented a broad cross-section of the community. They were not dominated by one group, as southern juries were by whites and the District of Columbia's are by blacks. What I most admired about them was the dedication to doing the right thing and the conscientiousness they brought to their deliberations. Thank goodness most of my friends who have been on jury duty recently report that those qualities are still present.

But the nullification trend is dangerous enough that we should think long and hard about redrawing the boundaries of the districts from which jurors are selected to increase the probability that each jury will be a democratic cross-section. Lawyers who appeal to racism should be cited for contempt. Most of all it's crucial that the people who form our attitudes—from school teachers to screenwriters—rekindle the idealism, the dedication to doing the right thing that has made jury service an ennobling expression of citizenship.

••••••••

IF YOU SHARE MY LACK OF enthusiasm for Latin American military organizations and for U.S. aid to them, you will not be surprised by the Historical Clarification Commission's finding that 93 percent of the 42,000 civilian killings during the long Guatemalan civil war were committed by the Guatemalan government's military forces and that these forces were aided by the CIA.

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REPUBLICANS SUSPECT that Bill Clinton is trying to sneak national health care in piecemeal. I hope they're right. But my fear is that he and Hillary want to forget about their great failure. Whatever the reason, the nation's shame remains: 43.4 million of us have no health insurance. But the press largely ignores the story. How I would love to see a Maureen Dowd devote her talents to skewering the bad guys on a life and death issue like this! Even more, I would like to see her legions of imitators spend less effort on being flashy and more on mastering substance—on conveying to their readers in a lively and interesting way the information they need to make informed decisions on critical issues such as health care.

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IN FEBRUARY THE WASHINGTON *Post* revealed that "dozens and dozens" of phone calls made by its reporters to the D.C. city govern-

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ment went unanswered with not even a recording or voice mail "no matter what the hour of the morning or the afternoon" or, when the phone was picked up produced unhelpful ("I have no idea") or wrong answers. The *Post* also reported in February that city council members had the gall to accept 15 percent salary raises. Washington may rank 21st in population among American cities but its council salaries rank higher than four of the nation's five biggest cities, higher than New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Houston.

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WHY SHOULD GREENWICH, Conn., one of our most advantaged communities, have one of the nation's highest percentage of learning-disabled students? Nearly 30 percent of its high school students are enrolled in special education. This is more than double the national average.

I'm indebted to ABC's Michele Norris for the solution to this mystery. It seems that once a student is classified as learning disabled, he or she becomes entitled to such goodies as one-on-one tutoring, untimed tests, and additional time to complete assignments. They also, and this could be the greatest inducement of all, get to take untimed SAT's.

These kids have parents smart enough and cynical enough to manipulate the system to their advantage. Where does this leave the kids who really need help and who don't have such parents?

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REPUBLICAN SENATORS AND congressmen took $3.2 million in "soft-money" campaign contributions from the gambling industry in 1997-98, according to Common Cause. The president of the American Gaming Association, which innocents should know is not concerned with croquet, is Frank J. Fahrenkopf Jr., a former chairman of the Republican National Committee. Shouldn't the Moral Majority and the Christian right repudiate these sinners?

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HERE'S A STORY ABOUT A FLOP. *The Washington Monthly* has sponsored three conferences in its 30-year history. (They were spaced about 10 years apart because it takes that long to forget the headaches involved in putting one on.) Each of the first two was a success, attended by roughly 350 people. But the third only managed to attract 50. Why was it such a failure?

It was called "Common Ground" and represented an effort to bring liberals and conservatives together to see where they could agree. But the timing was less than fortuitous. It was April, 1995. The Gingrich Revolution had just come to town. Common ground was out. Polarization was in—and continued to be, culminating in the last year's orgy of partisanship.

The middle way is, of course, not always the right way. Sometimes compromise is wrong. But listening to one another and trying to find points of conscientious agreement are essential to making democracy work. So I'm grateful the tide seems to be turning. Among the hopeful signs: a kind word for "Compassionate Conservatism" on, of all places, the op-ed page of *The Wall Street Journal*; a headline in *The Washington Post* reading "GOP Lawmakers Signal a New Desire for Common Ground"; and the House and Senate's speedy passage last month of the bipartisan Frist-Wyden bill designed to liberate public schools from bureaucratic red tape while making them more accountable.

Although fixing Social Security and Medicare poses the peril of the wrong kind of compromise, the need to do something about them before the next election *is* an incentive for the parties to get together. Another moderating factor will be a presidential race between Al Gore and George W. Bush. Neither comes close to being a raging extremist.

Most heartening of all to me was the Senate's reaction to Dale Bumpers when he came back to the chamber to speak at the impeachment trial of Bill Clinton. By fully conceding the weaknesses of his case and reaching out to the common sense and humanity of the other side, he spoke in the great tradition of political moderation. Members of the Senate responded with unusual warmth and enthusiasm, lining up to shake Bumpers' hand even though they knew they were risking the wrath of their far-right constituents watching on C-SPAN. It may have been the senators' way of saying we're fed up with self-righteous polarization.

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The Death of Local Radio

In the last three years, corporate America has gobbled up much of the dial. But there's a way to take it back

BY LYDIA POLGREEN

THE 1996 TELECOMMUNICATIONS Act was one of the most lobbied bills in history. Telecom and media interests spent $34 million on campaign contributions for the 1995-96 election cycle—almost 40 percent more than the previous election. The Telecom Act was chock full of goodies for the industry, from cable TV to wireless phone service providers, from television stations to long distance telephone companies. The bill covered so much ground that the quiet but revolutionary changes it made to the rules governing the ownership of radio stations went practically unnoticed.

Until 1996, a company could own no more than 40 radio stations nationwide, and no more than two AM and two FM stations in a market, regardless of the market's size. The Telecom Act removed all restrictions on national ownership, and greatly relaxed the rules on how many stations a company could own in a particular market. In a big market, a company can now own as many as eight stations, and in smaller markets, between five and seven. In smaller cities, it is now possible for two companies to lock up the entire market.

Predictably, these new rules triggered a feeding frenzy. One third of all radio stations in the United States have changed hands since 1996. In 1996 alone, 2045 radio stations were sold, for a total of $13.6 billion. Of the 4992 stations in the 268 ranked markets, almost half are now part a "superduopoly," that is, they are owned by a company that has three or more stations in the market. In 1996 the top ten radio companies controlled only 600 or so radio stations. Today, the four biggest companies—Chancellor Media, Infinity Broadcasting, Clear Channel Communications, and Jacor Communications, which Clear Channel is currently buying—control nearly twice that number. If you live in a major market, chances are there isn't an independent commercial radio station on your radio dial. There are 1,000 fewer station owners today than there were in 1995.

The Bland Band

What commercial radio broadcasters sought—and got—in the 1996 Telecom Act was the ability to create huge national media companies that could put radio on the national advertising map. They could pitch their stations to local and national advertisers alike. If Ford wants to sell cars in Cincinnati, it can deal exclusively with Jacor Communications, which controls eight stations in the city with a range of formats. It can target the 25-54-year-old soccer moms who might buy Aerostar minivans on Adult Contemporary station WVMX, tempt 18-35-year-old males with Mustangs on Rock station WEBN, and peddle Tauruses and Explorers to 35-54-year-old males on news/talk station WKRC.

Ohio-based Jacor was one of the earliest and most aggressive consolidators. In 1995 Jacor had 25 stations, by late 1996 it had 64 stations, and it currently owns 240 stations in 53 mid-sized markets. Pam Taylor, a spokesperson for Jacor, describes its operating strategy as a "hub and spoke" system: "At a small station in a small market, it costs a lot to have a live, local person on the air even 12 hours of the day. If you limit on-air live time to morning and afternoon drive, you can get the rest of the day's programming from the hub." New satellite and internet technology allows a technician at a small station literally to cut and paste bits of local news, weather and chatter into piped-in programming with a click of a mouse on a computer screen. Stations can even apply this technology to listener requests and call-in promotions, by simply clicking and dragging bits of dialogue into the appropriate places. The computer wizardry makes the

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broadcast seem local, and in many cases, it is hard for listeners to know they are hearing something shipped in from out of town.

For listeners, the most important result of consolidation has been that playlists are strategically selected by teams of market researchers who often live and work hundreds of miles away from the people that will actually hear the music. What you hear has been carefully crafted to appeal to targeted demographic groups. "Jacor is nothing if not shameless in taking what works at one station and applying it to others," says Pam Taylor. DJs at corporate stations have little discretion in what they play; it becomes unlikely that something new and untested will get on the airwaves. A recent story in *The Washington Post* showed a compelling link between the corporatization of post-deregulation radio and the greater difficulties facing new artists trying to get record deals and get their music played on radio stations.

Changes in any realm are usually cause for nostalgia, and so it has been with radio deregulation. It is easy to forget that radio has always been in thrall to the top 40, and the notion of the mythic, music-loving DJ who plays whatever strikes his fancy is mostly fiction. But consolidation has made it even less likely that you'll hear something new, different, or even slightly out of the ordinary. On an oldies station, probably the most heavily researched and systematized format in radio, you'll hear the Beatles' "Hey Jude" and "In My Life" practically every day, but more obscure songs like "I Need You" and "I'm Only Sleeping" get little or no play.

"A small entrepreneur can take risks and push the envelope for his or her vision," says Cheryl Leanza, deputy director of the Media Access Project, a public interest telecommunications law firm that advocates diversity in media. A publicly held media conglomerate simply cannot afford to take those kinds of risks—they have stockholders to please.

Radio has always had to balance listeners' desires with the need to deliver a predictable audience to advertisers. But it used to be the case that if listeners didn't like what they heard on a station, if it was monotonous and repetitive, they could tune away. Now there is just less choice out there. The radio spectrum is a preciously limited and publicly owned commodity. There is only so much room on it, and the big companies intend to dominate as much of it as they can.

The story of WAAI is a kind of parable for what has happened to small radio stations all over the country. An independently owned country music station based in the small town of Hurlock on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, WAAI employed five full-time announcers and a newsman, as well as a sales and management staff. The station broadcast live local programming from 5 a.m. to midnight. It was, by all accounts, a successful station—so successful that it turned a profit from the very first year it was in business.

When consolidation came in 1996, WAAI found its carefully-built advertiser base in serious jeopardy. "Stations that were owned by companies that had big stations in Washington and Baltimore could afford to offer ads in their smaller markets at a fraction of what we could," one staff member recalls. The corporate-owned stations were squeezing WAAI in the local advertising market, while simultaneously pressuring the owners to sell the station. In 1997 the owners sold the station to MTS Broadcasting for close to $1 million, nearly twice its actual value.

Not all small stations have sold out. But the Telecom Act drove station prices to lofty heights, putting them out of the reach of the typical entrepreneur and making it difficult for station owners to resist the financial pressures to sell. As a result, only the most dedicated local owners have survived. WDKX-FM, in Rochester, NY, has broadcast live, local programming 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the last 25 years. It is ranked fourth in a market of 35 stations. It is the only independently owned commercial radio station left in Rochester. WDKX broadcasts an eclectic, quasi-urban contemporary format that includes R & B, soul, blues, jazz, gospel, hip-hop, and even some country music. The station has nine full-time on-air personalities and five part-timers who broadcast on the weekends. Even the station's location is unusual—WDKX broadcasts out of a renovated mansion in downtown Rochester, not an industrial park on the edge of town. Andrew Langston, the owner, feels that the expense of all-live local programming is a small price to pay for the loyalty of his listeners. "We are connected to our community, and that is the most important thing for a radio station," Langston says. All of WDKX's market research is done locally, and the program director, Langston's son Andre, personally oversees play lists. The station's call letters also evince a personal touch—they were selected by Langston to represent famous black leaders: Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X. Langston says he has had many offers to buy his station, but he is not selling. "The station can do more for the Langston family and the Langston family can do more for the community," he says. If he can hold out, he'll be unusual among single station owners.

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Low Power to the People

The Federal Communications Commission seems to be sympathetic to single station owners, and its chairman, William Kennard, has taken steps to encourage further diversity in ownership by proposing to create three new classes of licenses for low-power FM stations (LPFMs). The proposed rules would allow licensing for stations to broadcast at powers ranging from one to one thousand watts. Currently most broadcasters are required to transmit at a minimum of 6,000 watts. This would open up the airwaves to hundreds, if not thousands, of new broadcasters. While no one is sure what the licenses would cost, the basic equipment to set up a small microradio station can be had for as little as $1,000.

LPFM could be an antidote to the corporatization of radio, putting licenses into the hands of people like Amanda Huron. Huron teaches radio production classes to children in an after-school program at the Latin American Youth Center in Washington, D.C. She wants to set up a community radio station in her neighborhood, Mount Pleasant, a mainly working-class area that is home to immigrants from Central and South America, the horn of Africa, and Southeast Asia, as well as an increasing number of whites drawn to the inexpensive old row houses, cultural diversity, and close-knit community. "Most of the Spanish programming available to the residents here is produced in the southwest or in Latin America," Huron says. "Why not have something more local, dealing with local issues?" Huron says she would run her station entirely with volunteers, and would incorporate as wide a variety of programming as she could, ranging from community news and event broadcasts to music shows and radio dramas.

The broadcasting industry hates the idea of LPFM. The industry's man on the Hill is Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-La.), chairman of the House communications subcommittee. The National Association of Broadcasters has vociferously opposed the proposed rules from the beginning. Tauzin told a group of NAB executives in February that LPFM would cripple existing radio stations by stealing their audience and taking away advertising dollars and possibly causing interference.

The industry's main fear about LPFM is simple: Competition does not make profits, consolidation does. The dust is finally starting to settle after the buying bonanza of the last few years, and the new mega-companies are saddled with the debt they racked up in their acquisition binges. The last thing they need right now is more competition.

The claim that LPFM would muddle the signals of larger stations seems dubious. The current interference standards were set 37 years ago, long before the advent of digital receivers that could pinpoint a station's signal on the dial and improved transmitter technology. Everybody but the broadcasting industry agrees that current standards are overly cautious and could be relaxed with no adverse effects on existing signals. Besides, the current standards represent a freebie to broadcasters. A station with a transmitter in Washington, D.C. might have a 20-mile radius listening area in which its signal is protected from interference. But the interference standards are so strict that the signal will probably go all the way to Baltimore, over 40 miles away. Broadcasters are not legally entitled to this extra reach, but they have grown accustomed to it. If an LPFM station were licensed in Columbia, Md., a suburb right between Washington and Baltimore, it could cut into the freebie radius of commercial stations in both cities.

When broadcasting began in the 1920s, it was mainly colleges and universities, labor unions, churches, and community organizations who ruled the airwaves. It wasn't until the late 1920s that the Federal Radio Commission, predecessor to the FCC, was established to oversee the radio spectrum, impose broadcasting standards, and issue broadcasting licenses. At that time it was decided that broadcasting of a more general character was in the public's interest, and the longstanding policy of the Commission has been to favor large, full-service stations. Until the early 1980s, the FCC imposed strict limits on the amount of advertising a broadcaster could air, and required that broadcasters commit a certain percentage of their on-air time to news, public affairs, and informational programming. Reagan-era deregulation removed those restrictions, leaving the marketplace to decide what broadcasters should and shouldn't provide to their listeners. Now with the Telecom Act, the barriers to consolidation have tumbled as well. Radio is just one of many sectors of our economy in which the space for small entrepreneurs is shrinking.

This is a shame. Radio is best when it is local, and media conglomerates, no matter how earnest they are in serving a local community, will always choose the cost and revenue benefits of consolidation over the particular desires of listeners. There should be room on that most public of open spaces, the radio spectrum, for as many different voices as humanity and the laws of physics allow. Now that LPFM offers a practical way to recapture some of radio's lost diversity, there's no exuse for not making it the law.

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The Silence of the Liberals

Conservatives are running the poverty debate. Here's why liberals should join it

BY JASON DEPARLE

If the memoirs of Dick Morris can be at all trusted, there occurred in the summer of 1996 a high-level conversation roughly along these lines: Angry, wavering president, railing at the Senate Majority Leader for placing punitive provisions in the welfare bill: "He *loved* cutting off children. You should have seen his face. He was *delighted* that he could savage them, *delighted*."

Wise adviser, taking the longer view: "If you sign this bill and don't screw up the rest of the campaign, I think you'll win by twelve to seventeen points. Then in your second term, you can ... provide the 'opportunity' part of the equation by proposing a massive program of inner-city jobs for people getting off welfare."

Becalmed president, seeing the light: "That's a good point. It's a process, and we're just starting out."

Wise adviser, closing the deal: "I believe that your signing of this bill, coupled with the recent cuts in the crime rate, will usher in a sixties-like era of commitment to helping poor people ... This bill will hasten the process and will make possible a commitment to providing jobs and good schools for the inner city that was not possible before."

Upbeat president, glimpsing his place in history: "You really think this will improve racial attitudes, don't you?"

Wise adviser: "I do, and after you sign it, I think the turnaround will be self-evident."

Deal struck. Bill signed. Old welfare system dies.

What's interesting here is the political forecast. Outside the Oval Office, President Clinton's decision to sign the bill was seen as a watershed defeat for liberalism. Here was a Democratic president ending the entitlement program that had served poor children since the Great Depression (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) and replacing it with a regimen of time limits and work requirements. Morris claimed that the opposite was the case. By ending welfare, he said, Clinton wasn't rejecting liberalism; he was clearing the way for its rejuvenated influence over one of its central concerns, ghetto poverty.

As usual, Morris supported his argument with an exotic array of polls—these alleging that taxpayers would spend generously on the poor in a post-welfare era. He turned to the Dakotas, of all places, to bolster his case. After taking a survey of farm state voters, Morris told Clinton that 80 percent would be willing to surrender the ethanol subsidy to finance jobs for welfare recipients.

It's three years later—so how have things worked out? In some ways, Morris' predictions have proven surprisingly prescient. Just a year after signing the bill, Clinton got a Republican Congress to rescind some of its harshest aspects, particularly the reductions in aid to legal immigrants. He pushed through a $3 billion program to help the most disadvantaged people on welfare find work. And to some extent, as Morris hoped, "welfare" and "poverty programs" are no longer words that automatically turn the average American sour. No one's rushing to the Mall to sing "We Shall Overcome"—it's not *that* kind of "sixties-like era." But the civic climate has changed. Ten thousand businesses have joined an organization that pro-

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motes the hiring of welfare recipients. Church groups across the country are giving job applicants interview outfits. Chambers of Commerce are posting billboards that challenge the "myths" about people on welfare. For the first time in a long while, anti-poverty work seems to have a tailwind.

But the part of the Morris scenario that definitely has not come to pass is the resurgence of the liberal voice in the poverty debate. On the contrary, there's a bad case of liberal laryngitis going around. There was a time, not that long ago, when liberals were full of confident ideas about poverty. Feeding programs! Legal rights! Head Start! Housing vouchers! As recently as the early '90s, the policy journals and think tanks boiled with new ideas, minor and grand. Expand the earned income tax credit! Replicate the South Shore Bank! Bring back the WPA! Support microenterprise! Health security for all! But during the 1996 welfare debate confidence and creativity were replaced by apocalyptic warnings, and the tradition of liberal anti-poverty thought has yet to recover. If liberals still have a voice on this subject, it's a hoarse whisper, warning that the welfare bill may still leave children sleeping on grates.

The silence of the liberals is particularly unfortunate because this should be a moment of opportunity. The poverty rate is falling. Employment is reaching historic highs. Ghetto life, though still steeped in grief, is finally showing signs of improvement. With the deficit gone, there is money to spend for the first time in 30 years. Faith in government is on the rise. The first Democratic president in two generations (whatever his problems) is finishing his second term. Liberalism—whether neo- or paleo-, principled or poll-driven—has finally rejuvenated itself as a political movement, and it has things to say on any number of policy fronts: saving Social Security, rescuing the environment, educating children, fortifying Medicare. All it seems to lack is something central to its tradition, a plan for the urban poor.

Conservatives, on the other hand, have never had a more confident anti-poverty vision or a more optimistic one. What rising Republican isn't now proclaiming himself a "compassionate conservative?" Granted, much of this consists simply of pointing at the declining welfare rolls to argue, prematurely, that welfare reform has "worked." Still, it is striking how little liberals have to say about the poor while conservatives glow and boast. To the extent that there's a national conversation about poverty, conservatives now control it.

No Expectations

This situation represents a dramatic reversal from a generation ago, when liberals held the franchise on hope about the poor. In the '60s, the basic liberal message was that poor people were as competent as anyone else, but restrained by artificial disadvantage—racial discrimination especially, but also shortages of food, cash, housing, education, and medical care. Offer equal opportunity (voting rights, WIC, food stamps, student loans), liberals argued, and the poor will flourish.

And many did. But progress stalled by the early '70s, and over the next decade it grew increasingly difficult to stay optimistic, especially about the central cities. Those who could leave, did. The problems of those left behind increasingly stretched far beyond the simple shortage of money, into behavioral issues like crime, drugs, and the proliferation of non-marital births. The inner-city poor often became complicit in their own tragedy, in the ways that William Julius Wilson bravely began to untangle more than a decade ago. Liberals grew mute on these issues of culture and conduct, for fear of "blaming the victim." (The uproar over the Moynihan Report is the most famous, but by no means the only, example of the dangers of talking about culture or behavior.) Liberalism knew how to talk about Rosa Parks but not Rosa Lee.

Liberals further constrained their influence when they began to argue that poor people were right to stay on welfare unless or until they got a "good job": no maid work and no Burger King. In most policy quarters, the quest for better jobs was a good thing, an extension of the broader demands by poor people and minorities for new opportunities. And for southern black women in particular, the desire for a good job may have had especially deep roots. For generations they had been exploited as domestics, and they were right to be wary of dead-end arrangements in the workplace.

But as it played out in the welfare debate, the good-jobs philosophy proved problematic. Substantively, it required long or repeated stays in training programs that typically proved ineffective, at least as run at the time. Politically, it discriminated against other low-wage workers and left liberals looking as if they had an inherent pro-welfare bias. As a moment that revealed the underlying dynamic, consider the 1970 exchange in the United States Senate in which Sen. Russell Long of Louisiana griped that he couldn't find anyone to iron his shirts. One welfare rights leader proclaimed: "We only want the kind of jobs that will pay $10,000 or $20,000! We aren't going to do anybody's laundry!" And the next speaker took

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the thought further: "You can't force me to work!"

Taken together, these developments—the silence about self-destructive behaviors, the preference for welfare over low-level work—left liberalism with an increasingly pessimistic implied message: Don't expect too much from people in the inner cities. In particular, don't expect them to work—at least not in the kind of entry-level jobs most could actually get. A common liberal move was not to talk about welfare at all, or even poor adults, but instead to try to shift the locus of concern to poor children, who could be presented as totally innocent.

Liberals should be monitoring the contention that simply moving people from welfare to work will solve the problems of the ghetto.

As the liberal voice grew muffled and gloomy, conservatives traveled an opposite path, away from their historic position of resignation or apathy ("the poor ye have always with ye") toward a professed optimism about the inner-city poor. By the mid-'80s, conservative intellectuals like Charles Murray (in his pre-*Bell Curve* days) and conservative politicians like Jack Kemp began to argue that the poor were as competent as anyone else—but restrained by artificial disadvantage. Only in their view, the artificial disadvantage was anti-poverty programs like welfare—"the liberal Government plantation," as Kemp liked to say. Abolish these programs, conservatives said—and the poor will flourish like anyone else.

For sure, many conservatives didn't really buy this happy vision. In private, some, at least, believed something closer to: "Why should we spend tax money on these people?" And optimism was only part of the message that gave conservatives an advantage. The other was old-fashioned toughness: Straighten up! Work, study, delay child-bearing, get married! Still, by the time of the mid-'90s welfare debate, conservatives weren't just chastising the poor. They were also promising to liberate them—by ending welfare. Liberalism, once the camp of confidence, was left to argue that without welfare, the poor would be unable to cope.

Leaving aside for a moment the question of who's right, it's clear that the confidence and optimism—and therefore the influence—now resides with conservatives. There's nothing inherently wrong with a strong conservative voice (indeed, the early results suggest at least some of their optimism was warranted). But with little liberal presence in the debate on poverty and welfare, there's an automatic imbalance. Conservatives will be inclined to discount the good that government can do for poor people, and to reduce the problems of poor people to the question of whether or not they're on welfare.

To turn Ronald Reagan's famous quip on its head, the standard conservative view has become: "We fought a War on Poverty—and we won!" The rolls are down. The grates are child-free. Q.E.D.

With a Government surplus, a buoyant economy, and mood of public goodwill, there's too much opportunity in the air to leave the public discussion at that.

Unsolved

A reinvigorated poverty debate should begin with the following proposition: the country doesn't have a poverty problem so much as a ghetto problem. To be sure, there are plenty of poor people outside the ghettos, and they have plenty of problems. The biggest one is the dwindling wage that most low-skilled workers can command. (See Frank Levy's piece in this issue.) To that can often be added a lack of health insurance; the shortage of affordable housing in safe neighborhoods; the scarcity of safe, reliable child care. Poverty is bad wherever it resides. But ghetto poverty is uniquely bad.

One reason non-ghetto poverty is a less severe problem is that it's easier to sell politicians and the public on government remedies for it. Social policy these days is filled with examples of expensive but popular anti-poverty programs—if they're for the working poor. The earned-income tax credit now gives low-income workers an annual cash subsidy of up to $3,700. And at nearly $30 billion a year, it now spends considerably more than the federal welfare program ever did. Yet it has had bipartisan support for 25 years, because its benefits are tied to work.

The same holds for the Children's Health Insurance Program, which will spend $24 billion over the next five years to cover the children of low-wage workers. It passed a Republican Congress as a part of a balanced-budget bill! The mother of all social programs, Social Security, is yet another example. It lifts millions of Americans from poverty each year through subsidized pensions and remains the most popular social program in history.

Plus, for all the struggles that low-wage workers endure, they don't call into question the larger promise

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and purpose of American life in the way that the problems of the ghettos do. The American economy remains the envy of the world, even at its entry-level rungs. Unskilled workers from Ecuador to India still stream into this country eager for a shot at American life. Ghetto poverty is a different story—one that emerged out of the most disturbing elements of American history (slavery and the Jim Crow system in the South), and one that *does* plant doubts about American life. Even poor people from India don't want to move to Cabrini Green.

By ghetto poverty I mean a condition that defines and envelops whole neighborhoods; continues across generations; and disproportionately affects minorities—historically blacks but increasingly Latinos as well. It's a poverty problem, but it is not exclusively (some would say not even primarily) about economics. It is also about behavior: weak labor-force attachment; non-marriage; low levels of education; high rates of out-of-wedlock births; drug use, and violent crime. It concerns a kind of social disorder that often alienates the ghetto poor from the broader traditions and aspirations of American society.

Not everyone who lives in a poor, inner-city neighborhood succumbs to these conditions, of course. Many work, study, and marry, and some manage to leave. (Indeed, part of the important work now for liberals is to explore and expand the pathways out.) But the nature of ghetto life is such that the odds are highly stacked against the people who live there, much more so than for the poor in general.

Why is this the more serious poverty problem? For one reason, the central cities impose an unparalleled barrage of hardships on the people who live there, especially in terms of neighborhood violence. Two, the conditions in the ghettos are uniquely destructive outside the ghettos as well; they rend the broader civic fabric. Members of the middle-class organize their lives so they, and their children, can avoid the central cities. Plus, the ghettos leave the broader society with an exaggerated distrust of government, whose social-policy successes tend to remain invisible while its failures (like public housing and welfare) lead the evening news. And finally, the suffering of central cities has had had a poisonous effect on race relations generally, generating a toxic distrust on both sides of the racial divide. There are hundreds of examples, but here's just one: the half-serious debate in black radio, television, and bookstores about whether AIDS was invented in government labs as a weapon of white racial conquest. If poor blacks are suffering this severely, the thinking goes, it must be the result of some kind of plan.

Think of the titles of some of the prominent works on ghetto life: *American Apartheid*, *There Are No Children Here*, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, *The Promised Land*. They describe a state of affairs that's not just unfortunate but downright Un-American.

Move On

Conservatives tend to think of addressing the problems of the ghettos solely in terms of ending welfare. On their terms, things are off to a good start. The rolls are down dramatically. (Nationwide, they've fallen about 40 percent from their 1994 peaks.) Employment levels are high. (Former welfare recipients appear to be finding jobs at or above the usual rates for people coming off welfare.) And so far, the adverse effects have been more limited than the critics feared. "Limited" does not mean non-existent. Without welfare, there are more families heading into food banks and shelters. And in some places (including Wisconsin, where the caseload reductions have been most extreme) there appear to be more children heading into relatives' care. Still, this is far short of the apocalypse conjured in the liberal imagination. Liberals have rightly argued that it's too soon to fully measure the negative consequences that may accompany the new time limits and work requirements. The economy is unusually strong. In most places the time limits won't kick in for several more years. And lives don't unravel all at once: the ranks of truly destitute families may well grow with time. Part of liberalism's mission is to worry about the very worst-off members of society, and today's advocates are right to do so. But liberals will be missing a big opportunity if they spend the next few years simply waiting for children to appear on the grates.

The bigger role that liberals could play is to monitor the contention that simply moving people from welfare to work will solve the problems of the ghettos. It's entirely possible that welfare reform could succeed in pushing poor, single mothers to rely more on wages and less on government aid—but still leave them stuck in awful, central-city neighborhoods, with many of the same difficulties as before. Welfare reformers like to think that work inherently leaves families better off, with more money and better "role models" for the children. And at one level, they're probably right: most poor women say they feel better about themselves when they go work. But there's nothing that says the payoff from going to work, by itself, is large enough to fundamentally alter the inner-city. It won't necessarily reduce crime, raise the school

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achievements of children, or bring back two-parent families. And getting a job doesn't necessarily give someone in the ghetto the chance to move out.

By now we've all been so conditioned to equate the problems of the ghettos with welfare, it's worth explaining how even a successful welfare-to-work program might bring only minor improvements to central-city life. For one thing, welfare reform has done virtually nothing to engage inner-city men. They remain a powerful, and often negative, force in neighborhood and family life. For a poor child, whether Mom gets her money from Burger King or from public aid is probably a less important question than whether there's a stable Dad. (Indeed, in a single-parent family a working Mom may mean less-supervised kids.) For another, the housing opportunities for low-income single mothers remain limited, even when they go to work. In part that's for economic reasons: housing costs have risen much faster than wages; many families simply can't afford to leave. And there are non-economic barriers to leaving too. The inner cities are filled with people, particularly women, who are afraid to *drive* in the suburbs, never mind move there. In Milwaukee, the city where I've spent the most time, I've had two women in recent weeks ask me to drive them to Wal-Mart on payday. Even though they had cars of their own, they were nervous about police harassment if they were seen driving alone.

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FEBRUARY 1999

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"Grading the States"
Governing

ANN LAURENT
"Stacking Up"
Government Executive

[illegible] true that the press rarely looks at how well government agencies are run. Not [illegible] commendable exceptions to this unhappy truth are these articles, [illegible] the Pew Charitable Trust, that scrutinize the management of state [illegible] The worst performers were Alabama's agencies, which got a D from Gov[illegible] *[illegible]ration and Naturalization Service, which* Government Executive [illegible]

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Put differently, the good news about welfare may be that it mattered less than we thought: people can get by without it. But the bad news may be the same as the good news: people can get by without it. A poor, single mother can scrape and hustle and patch together a string of dead-end jobs. She can keep having troubled relationships with sporadically employed men, many of whom move in and out of jail. She can rely on other government programs. All of this would leave her to be counted a success in the narrow terms of the welfare debate, without having achieved any kind of meaningful upward mobility.

This is where liberals should get back into the debate: rather than simply warning about the coming failure of welfare reform, they should try to build on its successes to achieve a bigger victory. For starters, they should challenge, in a thoughtful way, the conservatives' instinctive hostility toward social programs for the ghettos. As it happens, some of that hostility is waning anyway: with money in the bank, and conditions brightening, the Right is no longer as quick to regard every initiative as a doomed, wasteful affair, as it did a few years ago. Indeed, in the ghettos themselves, some programs do seem to "work." In housing, community groups funded by government have learned how to deliver safe, decent, affordable housing (see Robert Worth's piece in this issue). There are similar bright spots in the police and education worlds. Conservatives are inclined to see these as triumphs merely of toughness or standards. They are also triumphs of government action, and liberalism would offer a service by teasing out the lessons of the successes more fully than the conservatives are likely to do.

This is where liberals should get back into the debate: Rather than simply warning about the coming failure of welfare reform, they should try to build on its successes to achieve a bigger victory.

Another cause for liberals to embrace is that of economic progress for low-wage workers—turning job placement into job advancement. In particular, liberals need to look for new and more effective ways to deliver training. (One approach to consider is to pay training programs only after they place clients in jobs or raise their wages.) Virtually every welfare program in the country now has a "work-first" philosophy: get a job, any job, and never mind training. Conservatives defend this approach by arguing that even low-paid work pays better than welfare. (And it usually does.) And they tend to assume that as long as workers stay on the job, progress will take care of itself—"a job, a better job, a career," as the motto of one welfare program goes. But for lots of low-wage workers, it just doesn't work out that way. They can easily start at $6.00 an hour and spend years working their way up to...oh, $6.50 or so. That's especially the case in a niche of the labor market where part-time and temporary work is the norm.

For liberals to succeed here, they'll have to surrender their previous bias against entry-level work. For people on welfare (most of whom have already struggled in the classroom), the training needn't come at the front end. There's nothing wrong with flipping burgers—for a while. The key is to find ways to ensure that even entry-level work can carry with it a reasonable chance for advancement.

A final cause for liberals in the aftermath of welfare reform should be residential mobility. Crime control, better education, and housing programs may well make the ghettos more livable. But most families will still want to get out—to move to places with more jobs, better schools, less violence, and more helpful social networks. Real estate remains one of the last bastions of flagrant discrimination. Helping poor minority families gain a toehold in the suburbs does not rank high as a conservative concern. It doesn't even rank high as a liberal concern. But it should.

By itself, ending welfare probably won't solve the problems of the ghettos. But it could be a building block to a broader solution. A decade ago, the central cities seemed permanently lost, and the politics of poverty policy was paralyzed and sour. The situation is now healthier on every front: urban pathology is down; the economy is up; and the public mood has brightened. Conservatives aren't going to lead a new charge to fix the central cities. But welfare reform has left the most thoughtful conservatives newly interested in, and sympathetic to, the struggles of the poor. This is a moment of distinct opportunity. It would be a tragedy—for liberals, for the ghettos, and for the country—if the silence of the liberals were to continue. ●

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Left Behind

Everybody's leaving the welfare rolls—except Latinas

BY ALEXANDRA STARR

MARIA IS A SLIGHT, DIFFIDENT woman who has floated on and off of welfare for the better part of a decade. A native of Guatemala, she has raised six children, survived an abusive marriage, and suffered from medical conditions ranging from hypertension to diabetes. For the past six months, she and her two elementary school-aged children have slept on the living room floor of her eldest daughter's one-bedroom apartment as Maria has conducted a disheartening job search. "There are two things I can do," Maria explains in Spanish as she fingers her wispy black hair. "Take care of kids or work as a housecleaner." She has papered local motels with applications, but the only position she could find was a babysitting job on Saturday mornings. "It doesn't cover anything," she says quietly.

Over the past five years, the nation's welfare rolls have plunged by about 40 percent. But the decline mostly reflects an exodus of white women from public assistance. Minorities have lagged behind, and Latinas like Maria are leaving at the slowest pace of all. While Hispanics are 11 percent of the population, they now account for 22 percent of welfare recipients. That's nearly double the level of a decade ago. And in areas with a heavy concentration of Hispanics, the numbers are much higher: In New York City, for example, Latinas outnumber white welfare mothers almost twelve to one.

These women are subject to much more stringent regulations than they were just a few years ago. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 did away with the federal entitlement to assistance. Now states parcel out welfare checks with strict work requirements attached. There is a five year lifetime limit on cash assistance, and with few exceptions, recipients must work after two years on the dole. States were required to reduce their caseloads by 25 percent last year, and another 25 percent in 2000. In order to meet those goals, caseworkers have put enormous pressure on their clients to find jobs. There are loopholes in the legislation, however, that could allow some recipients to stay on the rolls beyond the time limits. States can exempt 20 percent of their caseload from the five year cap. In addition, the welfare bill's restrictions apply only to the funds states receive from the federal government; once the five years are up, welfare clients could continue to receive state money. In other words, the current restrictions allow for a residue of long-term public aid recipients.

Latinas will probably be disproportionately represented in this category. On virtually every predictor of gaining self-sufficiency, they are at the very bottom of the scale. According to a 1994 Census Bureau report, 64 percent of Hispanic welfare recipients did not finish high school, almost double the rate for white women on public assistance. In addition, nearly half of Latinas living in the United States are immigrants, and the vast majority speak poor English, disqualifying them from all but a handful of jobs. These women are also concentrated in inner cities, where employment is hard to come by. According to a report in *The New York Times*, competition is so fierce in some poor urban areas that supermarket managers can insist that even employees who bag groceries speak English.

Obviously, with their low levels of education and poor language skills, many Latinas would profit from employment training or literacy classes. But they are the women most likely to be shut out of existing programs. According to Community Voices Heard, a welfare advocacy group based in New York City, only 25 percent of Latinas on the dole have access to job placement and training services, compared with 40 percent of African American women. That's not just because most of those services aren't offered in Spanish. In many cases, Latinas can't even communicate with their

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caseworkers, who would refer them to programs.

Poor English proficiency isn't the only obstacle first generation Hispanics trip over in their effort to become self-sufficient. Hispanic culture is deeply conservative, and many Latinas cling to traditional views of motherhood. They are hesitant to leave their children, and voice doubts about their ability to measure up on the job. For now, many of these women have maintained their welfare eligibility by participating in state-sponsored workfare programs or providing constant proof they are job hunting. And as long as these women make a "good faith" effort to find work, most states probably will not cut them from public assistance.

With their low levels of education and poor language skills, many Latinas would profit from employment training or literacy classes. But they are the women most likely to be shut out of existing programs.

That fact that Latinas are having trouble leaving the rolls isn't a good sign. Hispanics are the fastest growing minority in the United States, and they show indications of developing an underclass. Teenage Latinas have a high pregnancy rate and the highest high school drop-out rate of all major ethnic groups, which translates into a high likelihood of becoming welfare mothers themselves. Latinas earn the lowest salaries of all women workers. And as they labor in low skill jobs, or struggle to find employment, it seems increasingly unlikely they will pull their families into the economic mainstream. "Latinos already have the highest rate of poverty in the United States," says Ramona Hernandez of the University of Massachusetts at Boston. "I think that number is just going to keep going up."

Spanning Generations

Latinas on welfare are not a uniform group. They include teenagers and aging grandmothers; some are third generation Americans, others came to this country just a few years ago. "More recent immigrants have to deal with the language issue," says Minerva Delgado of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense Fund. "Second and third generation Latinas have their own set of problems. They have low levels of education and literacy, and bigger families. Finding work is challenging for them, too."

Diana Perez, a third generation Mexican American living in Chicago, can testify to some of those challenges. Perez is among the 30 percent of Latinas on welfare who have less than a ninth grade education. As the single mother of six children, child care is expensive and difficult to find. And like many Latinas, she has a spotty work history; after 25 years on the dole, her resume only lists a brief stint on an assembly line.

Perez is not a woman of immodest ambitions. "I want to work in an office," she says. "A place that is clean." But after two years of job hunting, she hasn't even been able to find work in a factory or on a cleaning crew. "It makes you feel like putting your head in a bucket," she says of her unsuccessful job search. "You feel like you are nothing." But despite the frustrations she's grappling with, Perez possesses an enormous advantage over many first generation Latinas: She speaks English. Women who can only chat in Spanish have trouble landing jobs at McDonald's. "It's the biggest barrier for women trying to leave public assistance," says Ramona Hernandez.

It's not just Central Americans fresh off of the boat whose English proficiency is limited to a handful of phrases. Many first generation Hispanics *never* become bilingual. Walk through the streets of Adams Morgan, in Washington, D.C., where wizened men hawk green plantains and salsa music pulses at full volume, and the reason becomes readily apparent. In this Havana-like environment, women can buy their groceries and rent apartments without speaking a word of English. And Adams Morgan is by no means an abnormality—swaths of cities across the country resemble transplanted slices of Latin America. Many Latinos ensconce themselves in the small radius of these barrios. That doesn't do much for their English skills. And most of these neighborhoods are located in inner cities, where jobs are difficult to find. These residents are also sealed off from networks that could inform them about work opportunities in surrounding areas.

Many immigrants are undocumented, a status that can lead to some unusual welfare cases. Women who enter the United States illegally can't go on the dole.

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But their children born in the United States *are* eligible for benefits. There are roughly 100,000 "child-only" immigrant cases in the United States, according to a spokesman for the Department of Health and Human Services. Many more families are eligible for government largesse, but shy away from applying for aid because they fear being deported. Those who do receive a welfare check through their children end up playing by different rules than direct recipients. Most significantly, they are exempt from the five year time restriction. By the same token, they can't enroll in job training or English classes. Without work papers or access to social services, these women are doubly dependent on public assistance. Freed from short time restrictions, many will rely on government charity until their children are no longer eligible.

Take a 24-year-old Salvadoran woman we'll call Lourdes. Lourdes immigrated to the United States eight years ago, and all three of her U.S.-born children are on the rolls. She briefly scrubbed toilets in an office building and found her salary barely covered her babysitting bills. Now she shares a one-bedroom apartment with six other people, putting out feelers to find work as a maid. Even if she did have a green card, it's hard to see what other jobs she's qualified for—her-seven-year-old son has more formal education that she does. And because of her illegal status, she can't attend state-sponsored English classes or enroll in job training workshops. "They only way I could get papers is through a lawyer," she says almost inaudibly over the phone. "I can't pay for that."

Madres First

Scanty education, language barriers, and not-quite-above-board residency papers aren't the only stumbling blocks Latinas encounter as they attempt to move from welfare into work. Latin American culture is scarcely progressive, and many Hispanic women see their primary role as caretakers to their children. "The biggest issue in these women's lives is raising their children," says Tim Bell, coordinator of the adult education program at Erie Neighborhood House in Chicago. "They're being forced to take on an entirely new identity."

One of the thorniest issues all working parents have to confront is child care. For women raised to consider themselves *madres* first, spending time away from their kids can be particularly difficult. Latinas tend to have more children than white women, and they harbor a deep distrust of day care. A 1991 New York state study of female welfare recipients found that 75 percent of Hispanic mothers feared their children would be mistreated in day care, compared with 45 percent of non-Hispanic mothers. It's worth noting that most Latinas can only afford unlicensed day care, facilities that often run the gamut from terrible to mediocre. And in conversations with several women I got the impression they had all seen the same horror stories about deviant care givers on television. In any case, when they work, Hispanics generally have family members watch over their kids—an arrangement that may ease their consciences, but is far more unreliable.

Perhaps because so many Hispanic women primarily identify themselves as wives and mothers, they are less confident about what they can accomplish on the job. According to the New York study of public aid recipients, 45 percent of Hispanics on the dole feared they could not perform as well as others at work, compared with 26 percent of non-Hispanic women. That makes sense in the context of Latin culture. From a young age, women are barraged with the message that they must be deferential and self-sacrificing. Sociologist Evelyn Stevens dubbed the Hispanic image of the ideal woman *marianismo*—she postulates that the ultimate role model for Latinas is none other than the Virgin Mary herself. As psychologists Rosa Maria Gil and Carmen Inoa Vaszquez point out, the tenets of *marianismo* may make for accommodating housewives, but they don't mesh with the dictates of the workplace. "Can you imagine a list of attributes [like abnegation and submissiveness] in a resume, job description, or want ad?" they ask in *The Maria Paradox*.

Getting off of public assistance will require many Latinas to shake some of the most deeply held creeds of their culture. For that reason, public policy analysts say, it's important for social workers and teachers in job training programs to have a sense of the world Hispanics are coming from. But most social services not only flunk the "culturally sensitive test"—they are literally conducted in a different language. Fifty-seven percent of Spanish-speaking welfare recipients in Brooklyn and Queens cannot communicate with their case worker, according to Andrew Friedman of the welfare advocacy group Make the Road by Walking. Few states offer bilingual training programs. There are private and community-based organizations across the country that provide training in Spanish. But since the national zeitgeist became "work first" with the overhaul of the welfare system, many women have been barred from these programs, too.

Shunted

Until a year ago, there was no limit on the length

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of time welfare mothers could take classes at the Chicago Commons Employment Training Center, which serves a predominately Latina clientele. Because women encounter different obstacles as they prepare for work, it didn't make sense to impose an arbitrary "one-size-fits-all" deadline, explains program director Jenny Wittner. "A lot of these women need an enormous amount of help to have a shot at a decent job," she says. A whopping 82 percent of the women have been in abusive relationships. Some students can't decipher the help wanted ads or balance a checkbook. And Hispanics who are illiterate in both Spanish and English often need months of language classes before they can function in even low-paying jobs, says Wittner. In part because the program was open-ended, Chicago Commons has posted a solid success rate: Four years after leaving the program, 63 percent of the women are still working.

"The biggest issue in these women's lives is raising their children," says Tim Bell. "They're being forced to take on an entirely new identity."

When the welfare reform bill was passed in 1996, however, caseworkers began pulling their clients out of the Commons. It wasn't the caseworkers' fault, Wittner hastens to add. The legislation's strict requirements for caseload reduction have placed enormous pressure on social workers to shove women into jobs or short-term training programs. While Wittner cut the Commons' program down to six months, 12 of her students were forced to drop out in January alone. Wittner says service providers across the country are running into the same problem. "States are only allowing for two to three weeks of training," she says. "That just doesn't encompass enough time for learning."

Cristina di Meo of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies says Latinas in New York City have seen their educational opportunities fall, too. Community based literacy classes in the City were once stuffed with welfare mothers trying to learn English, she says. That changed in 1997, when New York City instituted a "workfare" program which requires able bodied public aid recipients to work 35 hours a week in exchange for cash assistance. "Students have dropped out of English courses in droves in order to meet the workfare requirement," says di Meo. The only program open to Spanish-speakers now is a workfare arrangement providing English classes two days a week over six months. "It's inadequate," she says. "The students hardly learn any English at all."

Second generation Latinas seem to have more opportunities to get ahead in workfare programs. Bronx native Sandra Agront has been on the dole her entire life: Her mother raised seven children on public assistance, and Agront opened her own account when she had the first of her three kids at 18. Nine years later, the second-generation Puerto Rican is working and preparing to take the GED high-school equivalency test. In order to fulfill her workfare requirement, she watches over kids at a shelter. She enjoys spending time with children; her goal now is to become a teacher's assistant. Even if it were an option, she wouldn't want to go back to collecting a welfare check and spending long days watching soap operas. "I like what I'm doing," she says.

Agront is an example of what workfare can be under the best of circumstances. Enrolling in GED classes was the first step to realizing her aspiration of attending college, and her internship is at least linked to her career goals. But Agront's arrangement wasn't the product of considered state planning—instead, she seems to have chanced upon it. Her first workfare job was sweeping floors in a tenement. The job training program she attends in the Bronx generally requires students to enroll full-time; the directors have made exceptions for some workfare participants. She's also fortunate to have two family members who can watch her young kids. With her support network and some lucky placements, she has a good chance of becoming self-supporting over the long term.

That's not the case for many monolingual and poorly educated Hispanics. Without English and basic literacy classes, these women will have trouble finding even low-skill jobs. And if they are hired, not all of these positions will lead to long-term employment. Take Maria, the mother of six who is currently unemployed. The primary reason she's been on the dole four times is because most of her work experience consists of cleaning motel rooms: When tourist seasons draw to a close, a round of layoffs generally ensues, and

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she goes back on welfare. In addition, few "pink collar" jobs provide benefits. If workers or their children fall sick, many will go on public assistance to qualify for Medicaid. They will, of course, lose this safety net if states begin to strictly enforce time limits.

A Two-Way Street

That's why we should stop giving short shrift to training programs. Providing instruction need not rule out requiring women to work or perform community service. If programs were time-flexible and provided on-site child care, many women would find ways to juggle jobs and classes. And in order to steer women away from the revolving door of work to welfare, it makes sense to prepare them for skilled jobs that pay above the minimum wage and provide benefits. "We've found that women who undergo vocational training have higher rates of job retention and more opportunities for advancement," says Wittner. "They have careers, not temporary jobs."

It's a challenge to persuade Latinas raised on a steady diet of *marianismo* to aspire to become electricians or welders. Aside from their own cultural biases, these women face pressure from boyfriends, husbands, and parents to keep out of traditionally *macho* professions. As one woman put it, "[y]ou can bust your knees scrubbing floors, and they think that's much better than being a foreman at a construction job earning $20 an hour." But single Latina mothers have to put food on the table, and they want to do meaningful work. When they realize how much heftier the paychecks are for fixing cars rather than flipping burgers, many will abandon the values in which they were raised and train for traditionally male crafts.

These women will also have to accept the fact they cannot be stay-at-home parents. Many Latinas already understand this. "I can count on one hand the women who have told me they don't want to work," says Andrew Friedman. "These women want jobs." If Hispanics feel more comfortable leaving their kids with family members, we should respect that choice. But caseworkers and employers should also insist these mothers have back up plans for the days aunts and grandmothers do not come through. And we should assure the child care available is safe and affordable.

If we met these women half way, and provided them with the training they need to become self-sufficient, the vast majority of Latinas would rise to the challenge. Like most welfare recipients, they want to make their own decisions and provide their children with decent upbringings. But we are not meeting these women half way. Quite the opposite; we are actually cutting them off from the few comprehensive training programs that are open to them. And with the rules rigged this way, most service providers are pessimistic about the prospects for indigent Hispanics. "These women are going to end up in low-paying, low skill jobs," warns Tim Bell, director of adult education at Erie House. "Their kids will grow up on the street. And believe me, we will pay a price for it." ●

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Growth is Not Enough

If you think a robust economy will automatically generate prosperity for all, think again

By Frank Levy

In a recent assessment of George W. Bush, *Wall Street Journal* columnist Paul Gigot noted with approval that Bush had selected policy advisers who were "credible with the party's growth wing". At first glance, Gigot's description seems out-of-date: is there any discernible non-growth wing in the Republican Party, or, for that matter, in the Democratic Party? In 1992, not even Steve Forbes would have dared to claim he could deliver the combination of low inflation and low unemployment we have enjoyed since mid-decade. Bill Clinton has taken the growth issue away from the Republicans, just as he has taken so much else. Or, I should say, "retaken the growth issue". It was, after all, John Kennedy who 39 years ago proclaimed, "A rising tide lifts all boats."

But the economy has changed in several important respects since Kennedy's time. People who think there are no economic problems left in America, and that there need be no appreciable differences between the attitudes of liberals and conservatives about economic growth, need to look at the present-day American economy more closely. If we don't generate a discussion about the nature of our prosperous economy, there's a real danger that we're going to grow our way to a society that doesn't work for a good portion of its people.

Economic growth comes in two flavors. Business cycle growth expands the gross domestic product (GDP) by lowering the unemployment rate and putting people into jobs. We have probably now reached the limit of the business cycle growth rate; few people believe unemployment can fall much lower than it is now.

Over the longer run, GDP grows through gains in productivity—output per worker. Rising output per worker translates into rising wages and incomes. The productivity gains of the last 70 years help explain why average family income today is more than three times higher than it was in 1929 (corrected for inflation) even though the 1929 unemployment rate was 3.2 percent.

In Kennedy's time, the nation was in a 26-year productivity boom in which output per worker was rising at a very high 3 percent per year. The result was a long run of upward mobility, in which most people made big income gains over their careers. For example, in 1949, the average 30-year-old man earned about $16,800 (in 1997 dollars). That isn't much money in today's terms—little more than the poverty standard for a family of four. But twenty years later, this average man, now 50, was earning almost $40,000, a more-than-doubling of income over 20 years.

Productivity growth slowed sharply in the early 1970s, and while the most recent numbers have turned up, it is not yet clear that the slump is over. Until productivity growth does revive, career income gains will, on average, be much slower than they were in the Kennedy era. In 1976, the average 30-year old male earned $31,100, almost twice as much as his 1949 counterpart. But by 1996, his earnings had increased only to $37,800—a gain of one-fifth spread over two decades. Men who were college graduates saw their incomes grow faster, but high school graduates saw virtually no growth at all: Their average income was $27,600 at age 30 and $28,400 at age 50.

The opening of a substantial college-high school earnings gap represents a second major change, after the slowing of productivity growth, since Kennedy's time. When Kennedy said that a rising tide lifts all

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boats, a lack of formal education was no obstacle to a good job. A farm laborer, displaced by mechanization, could often get on a bus to a city and find a factory job at higher pay.

Since 1980, the economy has heavily favored the better-educated over the less-educated. When technology or international trade displaces a semi-skilled manufacturing worker, moving to a good job now means getting the training to become a computer repairman or a laboratory technician. That's a lot harder than getting on a bus. In the past two years, very tight labor markets have raised all workers' wages. But in the past two decades, the labor market has changed much faster than people can change their skills. As a result, less-educated men and women have been hit hard. They are the workers whose paychecks are most hurt by economic change. They are also the parents required to make the biggest improvements in their children's education to avoid repeating the cycle.

People who think there need be no appreciable differences between the attitudes of liberals and conservatives on economic growth need to look at the present-day American economy more closely.

The post-1980 association between income and education partially explains why income inequality is substantially greater today than it was in Kennedy's time. Between 1979 and 1997, the average income of the middle one-fifth of American families rose from $42,000 to $44,600 (adjusted for inflation). Over the same years, the average income of the richest five percent of families rose from $148,000 to $235,000. These are U.S. Census figures that, for a variety of reasons, understate the highest incomes. Top incomes are better measured by U.S. Treasury summaries of tax returns. The latest data show that in 1997, taxpayers reporting over $200,000 in adjusted gross income—about 1.3 percent of all tax filers—accounted for 19.7 percent of all adjusted gross income that taxpayers reported.

From an economist's perspective, this isn't news. Economic theory clearly states that growth does not automatically benefit everyone—Kennedy's time was a happy anomaly. For this reason, economists' broad embrace of economic growth rests on a caveat: in an expanding economy, the winners ought to be able to compensate the losers and still be better off themselves.

It is here, though, that ideological differences begin to emerge. When Paul Gigot refers to the "growth wing of the Republican party," he is describing people who both want an ever-expanding role for free markets and who believe that free-market outcomes are fair almost by definition. The most exuberant members of this group—Steve Forbes again comes to mind—argue that laissez faire will automatically produce what Kennedy described—the rising tide that lifts all boats. But if the tide does not lift all boats, these conservatives say, there is little to be done about it. Making the winners help the losers would mean imposing higher (also known as "confiscatory") taxes, and so would kill the economy's growth and hurt everybody.

Conservatives bill this position as pro-growth, but the truth is that it's potentially pro-stagnation. Conservatives are probably right to argue that our best hope for raising productivity involves relying heavily on markets and the competitive pressure they bring. But in a democracy, markets have to command political support. If we permit technological change and free trade to distribute incomes in increasingly unequal ways, much of the population will come to view markets and economic growth as one more special-interest cause. When the next recession comes, people who propose to control the flows of capital and jobs—for example Pat Buchanan, with his rhetoric of restrictions on trade—will grow in appeal.

A liberal pro-growth policy must continue to emphasize education. It also must emphasize continued supports for low and moderate income families. Liberals aren't doing their job if they merely endorse, in the name of promoting growth, across-the-board tax cuts. Tax relief, if we have it at all, should focus on families with incomes under $50,000 and include refundable credits for families with no federal income tax liability. Social Security reforms should preserve Social Security's current redistribution from high to low earners. Liberals must beat back, as they did in 1997, Republican attempts to dismantle the earned income tax credit, the major income supplement to low-wage workers that some Republicans have targeted as a form of "welfare." If liberals fail to make this connection—if we believe, as conservatives appear to believe, that we can pursue GDP growth pure and simple, without concern for fairness—we may find that we have made both growth and fairness into scarce commodities. ●

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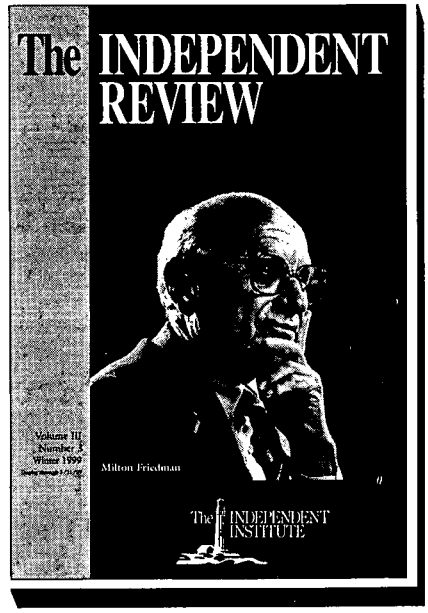

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Guess Who Saved the South Bronx? Big Government

The silent partner in "community development"

BY ROBERT WORTH

ON DEC. 10, 1997, PRESIDENT CLINTON made a surprise appearance in the South Bronx. After a brief stroll through the once-blighted neighborhood of Charlotte Street, Clinton credited local community development groups with transforming the nation's worst slum into a livable place over the past 15 years. "Look at where the Bronx was when [president] Carter came here in despair," he told the crowd at the Madison Square Boys and Girls Club. "Look at where the Bronx was when President Reagan came here and compared it to London in the Blitz. And look at the Bronx today. If you can do it, everybody can." The story he told was already becoming a familiar one: A group of local people band together to fight off the pimps and pushers and rebuild their neighborhood. "The citizens of the South Bronx set an example that can serve a hundred other slums around the country," Ted Koppel declared in a 1996 Nightline segment.

It's certainly true that the South Bronx has undergone a miraculous transformation. Japanese tourists who come by bus to see "Fort Apache, the Bronx" find themselves staring out at suburban-style homes with glossy lawns and picket fences instead. Most of the charred hulks that made the area seem like a wasteland are gone, and it's hard to walk a few blocks without hearing the buzz and hammer of construction crews. In the 42nd Precinct, which includes the worst areas of the "Fort Apache" days, the number of shootings has dropped by over two-thirds in the past five years, the number of robberies and assaults by over half.

But there's something missing from the usual story about how it happened. Yes, the local Community Development Corporations (CDCs) have made an enormous difference. But they've been around for decades. In fact, they were there when the Bronx was burning in the '70s, and if they had been the only heroes in the story, there might not be anything left in the Bronx to celebrate. The truth is that the South Bronx has come back because the government intervened. Starting in the mid-'80s, New York City started pouring some $500 million a year into affordable housing—more than the next 50 largest U.S. cities *combined.* Much of that money went into the South Bronx. Equally important, city officials used the money effectively, avoiding the terrible mistakes of old-style top-down "urban renewal." They provided both funding and expertise for the nonprofits and CDCs who have received most of the credit for the borough's revival. These groups also got help from two federal government programs, the Community Reinvestment Act and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, which brought banks and private companies into an area they had previously shunned.

It's understandable that government should get less than its share of the glory. "In a way, that's our role, to work behind the scenes and let local people pick it up from there," says Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer. But failing to acknowledge government's role can also be dangerous. It encourages the myth that government's role in cities is still a matter of evil

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bureaucracies decreeing "slum clearance" and building nightmarish housing projects that exacerbate crime and decay. Above all, it perpetuates the irrational bias against the public sector that persists among today's political elites, and it risks missing the lessons that government has learned in places like the South Bronx—lessons that should be at the heart of any future effort to revive broken communities.

Malign Neglect

If the idea of government saving the South Bronx sounds unlikely, perhaps that's because most people know government helped ruin the borough in the first place. The building of the Cross Bronx Expressway, which Robert Moses oversaw during the 1950s, has become Exhibit A in the failure of large-scale urban planning policies. "The path of the great road lay across 113 streets, avenues, and boulevards; sewer and water and utility mains numbering in the hundreds; one subway and three railroads, five elevated rapid transit lines, and seven other expressways or parkways, some of which were being built by Moses simultaneously," wrote Robert Caro in his 1974 indictment of Moses, *The Power Broker*. Moses blasted through it all, displacing tens of thousands of middle-class people and creating an instant slum.

Moses wasn't the only villain. In the '50s and '60s, as new waves of poor Puerto Ricans and southern blacks came to New York, the city welfare department "dumped" the poorest of them into the South Bronx by offering landlords above-market rents for taking welfare clients. In retrospect, this policy seems like a recipe for disaster, creating concentrations of extreme poverty that were bound to prove toxic. But it was the easiest route for the city, since there was no longer any local organization to protest. The borough's once-formidable Democratic political machine had fallen apart as the older Jewish, Irish, and Italian immigrants who supported it moved away.

The tenements where these newer immigrants lived, most of which were built before 1915, were rapidly wearing out. But the landlords couldn't afford to renovate them, thanks to another bad policy—rent control. By the 1960s, the inability to raise rents was making it increasingly difficult for landlords to make a profit, much less maintain their aging buildings.

The city also helped to destroy the job market in the South Bronx. There were other reasons for the decline of the borough's manufacturing base, but the city made things worse by imposing new corporate income taxes on top of federal and state taxes, and boosting permit and inspection fees. In 1959 the area had 2,000 manufacturers; by 1974 there were only 1,350, and the number of jobs they supplied dropped by a third, according to a 1975 article in *Fortune* magazine. The welfare rolls rose correspondingly. In the Hunts Point neighborhood alone, there were 11,000 welfare recipients in 1962, and 53,000 a decade later. As the area's social fabric frayed, crime exploded: Reported assaults quadrupled between 1960 and 1969.

Still, the South Bronx might have been saved—according to many people who still lived there—if not for what former Congressman and Borough President Herman Badillo calls "the worst mistake of all." In 1968 the state sponsored the construction of Co-op city, a $413 million, 15,400-unit apartment complex. It was the best new housing in the borough, and if it had been integrated into existing neighborhoods it might well have had a stabilizing effect, propping up local businesses and strengthening the area's political constituency. Instead, the planners put it all by itself in the northeast corner of the Bronx, on the site of an old amusement park. Within a year it sucked out what remained of the South Bronx's middle class, leaving those who remained in a virtual ghost town. By 1970 locals were calling the once-opulent Grand Concourse a "movie set"—a facade of grandeur surrounded on all sides by decay.

At the same time, federal money was pouring into the South Bronx as never before. Hoping to stem the area's disintegration, the federal government spent hundreds of millions in urban improvement programs, all to no avail. In 1967 the area became part of the Johnson administration's Model Cities program, drawing more than $300 million. The result was more failed projects, some of which were memorialized with the term "planner's blight"—vast areas of vacant land from which communities were ousted for new projects that never materialized.

Despite these efforts, and in part because of them, the Bronx began to burn in about 1970. Some of the fires were accidents, the inevitable result of decaying electrical systems. Many were set by landlords who would then collect the insurance money. Often they would sell the building—whether it was still inhabited or not—to "finishers" who would strip out the electrical wiring, plumbing fixtures, and anything else that could be sold for a profit before torching it. "Sometimes there'd be a note delivered telling you the place would burn that night," one man who lived through the period told me. "Sometimes not." People got used to sleeping with their shoes on, so that they could escape if the building began to burn.

Some of the remaining tenants burned their own

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buildings, thanks to yet another bad city policy. Welfare recipients living in decaying city-owned buildings naturally wanted to find a better alternative, but regulations forbade payment of moving expenses to anyone who had not lived in same place for at least two years. There was one exception to this rule, and it was posted in large type in neighborhood welfare offices. Any tenant burned out of his or her building automatically became eligible for a grant—usually about $1,000 but sometimes as much as $3,500—to cover the cost of new clothing, furniture, and moving. Also, burned-out families went to the top of the waiting list for public housing projects.

During the mid-'70s, the South Bronx averaged 12,000 fires a year. The area lost some 40 percent of its housing stock, and 300,000 people fled. In the burned-out zone that remained, police fought a losing battle against junkies and murderous teenage gangs. In 1977, Jimmy Carter paid a fleeting visit to the rubble-strewn Charlotte Street, promising to revitalize the area. *The New York Times* commented that the South Bronx was "as crucial to an understanding of American urban life as Auschwitz is crucial to an understanding of Nazism." But nothing came of Carter's high-sounding words. The city was in the throes of a fiscal crisis, and the feds were sick of watching their money fall into a burial ground of failed urban policies. By 1981 the *Los Angeles Times* could declare that the South Bronx was "both a place and a scare-word."

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CARLOS ORTIZ

The 400 block of Longwood Avenue in the mid-1970s

Love Among the Ruins

In a sense, what happened in the South Bronx bore out the warnings Jane Jacobs had issued in her 1961 classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. In the name of urban renewal, she wrote, "[w]hole communities are torn apart and sown to the winds, with a reaping of cynicism, resentment and despair that must be seen and heard to be believed." These disasters flowed from the planners' failure to recognize that neighborhoods are living things that cannot simply be uprooted and replanted from afar. Instead, planners need to listen to the strengths of a community and build on them. They must maintain the diversity—of housing stock, of activities, of incomes—that keeps an area culturally vibrant and economically viable. They must pay attention to what makes residents want to rebuild and maintain their own neighborhoods, rather than burn them down.

As it happened, the South Bronx had its own little laboratory of Jacobs-style revival during the 1970s. Even as the area was burning, a few small neighborhood groups began to scratch out pockets of order amidst the ruins. "Don't Move, Improve," became the motto of a tiny group calling itself Banana Kelly, after the gentle curve of Kelly Street, where the members lived. "Even though it was a terrible time, there was a vacuum, and an opportunity to build," says Harry DiRienzo, one of the group's founders. Like 19th century homesteaders, they would buy a building from the city for a nominal sum and try to get a below-market loan for its renovation. Sometimes the workers would move in as taxpaying cooperative owners, with the partly-unpaid labor of the group keeping rents affordable. Another pioneer was Father Louis Gigante (brother of the famed mobster Vincent "the Chin" Gigante), who founded the Southeast Bronx Community Organization and successfully organized his Hunts Point constituents to rebuild dozens of abandoned buildings for low-income local people.

Yet for all their heroism, the CDCs were too small and too poor to turn the tide in the South Bronx. The city helped keep them alive, but a financial crisis lasting through the '70s prevented it from doing more. Housing had traditionally been a federal responsibility, but the Carter administration was reluctant to pour money into such a notorious sinkhole. After Reagan was

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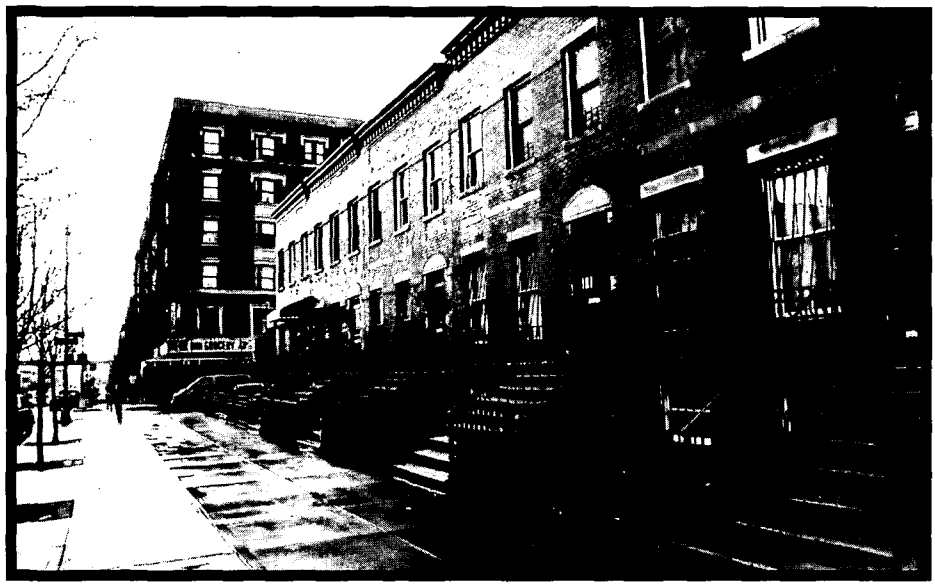
elected the federal government made a full-scale retreat, slashing the overall budget for affordable housing by two thirds. Even small efforts failed. In the wake of Jimmy Carter's celebrated visit to the rubble of Charlotte Gardens in 1977, Mayor Ed Koch tried to put up new housing on the site, but the city's Board of Estimate voted him down.

It took three things to turn the city's head back towards the Bronx. First, the financial crisis ended and the city got back into the bond market in the early '80s, freeing it to spend money. Second, by the mid-'80s homeless men and women were living in cardboard boxes on Fifth Avenue, prompting an outbreak of civic concern and putting political pressure on Koch to build more affordable housing. Still, a third element was required: political commitment. Koch could have ignored the Bronx after his re-election in 1985, but he chose to follow through on an unprecedented "Ten Year Plan" for affordable housing. The plan called for $4.1 billion in reconstruction—later upped to $5.1 billion. Although the plan was citywide, the rebuilding of the Bronx was a high priority. "The goal was to rebuild the entire South Bronx, to take every vacant building and make it into a viable housing unit," says Abe Biderman, Koch's housing commissioner during the late '80s. According to the city's department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD), some $1.3 billion of city funds went into the South Bronx alone.

In this respect, the Bronx also benefited from the skill and honesty of its own borough president, Fernando Ferrer, a former city planner. "In Harlem all the civic and political leaders were interested in was the contracts, and who would be given the job of rehabilitation and who would decide who would work on what," says Koch. "Ferrer never did that. All he did was to say let me give you my advice on what to do first, and we listened to him." This may sound like common sense, but it was worlds away from the practice of Stanley Simon, Ferrer's predecessor. "The first time I met Stanley," says Kathryn Wylde, the director of the New York City Housing Partnership, "he took me aside and bragged that he personally gave every builder the [permit] for their home, and that he would be telling me who the builders were for each of our projects."



The same block today

Still, honesty and buckets of money were not enough. The Ten Year Plan consisted of a bewildering variety of programs, but its success can be boiled down to a few basic principles, all of which represent a real advance over the redevelopment efforts of the past.

Use what's there. For years, city officials had argued that the South Bronx was "beyond tinkering, rebuilding and restoring," as Robert Moses put it in 1973. Three years later Roger Starr, the city's housing administrator, suggested a goal of "planned shrinkage"—razing the worst areas, relocating the residents, and closing down subway stations, police and firehouses, hospitals and schools. The Koch administration reversed this draconian logic, recognizing that it would be foolish not to make use of the city's countless abandoned buildings. "We made a conscious decision that we could make scarce resources go farther if we did rehabilitation," says Paul Crotty, Koch's housing commissioner from '86 to '88. In part, this decision grew out of a desire to maintain whatever sense of community was left, as the CDCs had been doing for years. But it also made economic sense. The cost of a "gut rehab," in which everything but the building's outer walls is removed and replaced, turned out to be $65,000 per apartment, versus $135,000 if you built from scratch.

Maintain a mix of incomes. The classic mistake of the

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past had been to create "low-income" or welfare enclaves, which rapidly degenerated into havens of crime. In fact, the city was so eager to house the homeless in the 80s that it repeated this mistake with its Special Initiative Project (SIP), filling entire buildings and even clusters of buildings with homeless people. The CDC community had seen this movie before, and they reacted at once. One night David Bayez, development director for Banana Kelly, persuaded a city councilman to drive up and take a walk with him along Southern Boulevard, where the new homeless projects were crawling with pushers, fights, and unattended children. Soon afterward, the city began spreading the homeless out into the other buildings it renovated.

"The goal was to rebuild the entire South Bronx, to take every vacant building and make it into a viable housing unit," says Abe Biderman, Koch's housing commissioner during the late '80s.

The city also tried to encourage home ownership, on the premise that homeowners would have a stake in the neighborhood and provide an anchor against decay, even in harder economic times. So far, it appears to have worked; the homes have sold easily, and their effect on neighborhoods is easy to see. Driving past the bodegas and vacant lots of Brook Avenue in the Melrose neighborhood, you suddenly come upon a solid block of immaculate light blue houses with gates and welcome mats. Keep driving and you'll see them appear again and again, in different shapes and sizes, like flashes of suburbia amidst the older tenements. Most of them were built by the New York City Partnership and are designed for families with an income of about $50,000—"typically, say, a nurse and a corrections worker," says borough president Fernando Ferrer. The most famous of these homeowner developments is Charlotte Gardens, which is invariably featured in TV and newspaper stories about the revival of the South Bronx, and which Clinton chose for his 1997 pit stop. It's true that Charlotte Gardens is a shocking symbol of the change that has come to the South Bronx: Where there was little more than rubble, there are now 89 one story ranch-style houses, with picket fences, satellite dishes, immaculate lawns, and tree-lined streets. Yet for all its symbolic importance, Charlotte Gardens is a poor model, because it lacks the density the Bronx needs to maintain diverse neighborhoods and revive its retail culture.

Use Third Parties. For all the good will and experience of the CDC's, handing them the money and asking them to fix the South Bronx would have been a disaster. Like any local group, they weren't used to dealing with large quantities of money, and their construction experience was often narrow. In most of its renovations the city relied on a nonprofit intermediary such as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) or the Enterprise Foundation to help out. In many cases, the city would sell the building for a dollar to the owner, usually a local nonprofit. The city would then contribute some portion of the money necessary for the rehab—depending on the income level of the prospective tenants. The rest would come in part from the owner, and in part through a loan arranged by the intermediary, or even by a bank. The city would often eliminate real estate taxes on these buildings for a specified period, so that the owner could charge lower rents for low-income residents.

The result was a process that protected the city from swindlers—as previous construction efforts had not—by exposing the owner to the risks of a private loan. "We spent almost $5.1 billion and there was never a hint of scandal," says Paul Crotty, the former housing commissioner. Equally important, the city's plan allowed small local owners to finance a rehab without the tremendous risk and red tape of financing it themselves. "The key thing was that we created a system where small owners could work with a complex program," says Michael Lappin, president of the Community Preservation Corporation, which arranged loans for many of the rehabs. "All they had to do was get the job done. That allowed the city to engage the energy and resources of small businesses as they never had before."

Two federal programs also helped to bring banks and private money back to the area. The Community Reinvestment Act, which was passed in 1977 and strengthened in 1995, rates banks based on their willingness to meet the "convenience and needs" of low-income communities, and that rating is used to judge their applications for mergers and branch openings. The result, according to all the CDC officials I spoke

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with, has been a dramatic return of bank lending into an area that helped to popularize the term "disinvestment" back in the '70s. "There's a market here now, because there's a working-class community," sys Ralph Porter, president of the MBD Housing Development Corp. "But I'm not sure the banks would be back if not for CRA." The Low Income Housing Tax Credit, which offers breaks to private investors who become involved in poor areas, has had a similar effect since it was passed in '86. According to the National Association of Homebuilders, low-income housing credits are involved in well over 90 percent of all affordable rental housing produced in the United States. "It's brought private-sector discipline to the production of low-income housing," says LISC's Buzz Roberts. "In places like the South Bronx, it's been indispensable."

Invest in neighborhoods, not just housing. "Nobody cared what we wanted when they built this place," one resident of an East Harlem project told Jane Jacobs in 1960. "They threw our houses down and pushed us here and pushed our friends somewhere else. We don't have a place around here to get a cup of coffee or a newspaper even, or borrow fifty cents. Nobody cared what we need." In the Bronx, the city made a conscious effort to avoid this kind of callous disregard. They subsidized retailers to move in and live over their premises, on the principle that people with a stake in the neighborhood take better care of it. They rebuilt dozens of parks and branch libraries, and they worked with the CDC's to provide new residents with child care, job referrals, and other services. The investment appears to be paying off: Several large private retail chains have moved into the area in the past few years, including Rite Aid, CVS, Toys R Us, Old Navy, Home Depot, and J.C. Penny. The Bruckner boulevard, where Tom Wolfe's protagonist Sherman McCoy got lost and terrified in *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, is now lined with antique stores. Not far away is a new ABC Carpet and Home outlet, along with a beer bottling plant, a fish farm, and a computer company; the *New York Post* is also building a color printing plant.

The city also relied on the CDCs to maintain the buildings it renovated day to day, rather than managing them from a distance. This may sound like mere common sense, but from the perspective of urban planning it was a quantum leap. If you've ever walked through a low-income housing project, you've probably been struck by the impression that no one seems to be taking care of the place—the graffiti, the litter, the broken windows, the suggestion of crime on top of poverty. That's partly because the city officials responsible for it are too far away, or simply don't care what happens in the building; after all, they don't live here.

In the Bronx, the CDCs were always right around the corner—or even down the hall—and they kept an iron hand on the buildings they managed. All of them screen applicants for their buildings, usually with home visits as well as credit checks. They also monitor their tenants after they've moved in. MBD, for instance, employs "service coordinators" who check up on everyone in the building. "MBD wants to maintain a certain quality of life in the building," one MBD tenant told me. "If any tenant creates a problem, drugs, or whatever, they are told that we won't stand for it." There is plenty of graffiti in the South Bronx, but not on buildings owned or managed by CDC's. "It's not that it doesn't happen, it's that we sand-blast it off as soon as it does," says Ralph Porter, MBD's director.

Don't put too much faith in "economic development." For 30 years, federal anti-poverty policy was based on the idea that the way to revive ghettos was by bringing in businesses through tax breaks and creating a local job base. Enterprise Zones and Empowerment Zones are the most recent incarnations of that faith. The South Bronx experience suggests that when it comes to restoring the social fabric of the inner cities, economic development is less important than physically rebuilding an area.

That's not to say that new jobs aren't desirable. The South Bronx still has the highest rates of unemployment and public assistance of any area in the city, and its public schools remain among the worst. But there's no reason to believe that local employment is the answer to these problems. It's a 15-minute subway ride to midtown Manhattan, and that link is far more important to the area's future than the retailers who have come back to the area. "Neighborhood economies are fine," says Frank Bruconi of the Citizens Housing and Planning Council, which conducted the one major study to date of the Bronx revival, "but the jobs have to be reconnected to the broader metropolitan market. Without that, you're not going to have the infusion of income you need to get people off public support."

The Bronx is Up ...

The South Bronx may always be a poor area. It's not easy to draw the middle class into a place whose name is still synonymous with urban crime. There are other problems, too: Thanks to Robert Moses, the area is crisscrossed with expressways, and it has more than its share of bus depots and medical waste transfer stations. As a result, the air quality is worse than

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any other borough's.

But the fact that the South Bronx will never be mistaken for Scarsdale shouldn't detract from the city's accomplishment. Perhaps the best measure of that effort has been the peaceful repopulation of the area. Despite all the talk about Giuliani's new policing policies, police in the South Bronx tend to attribute much of the dramatic drop in crime to the city's rebuilding efforts. "When people have a stake in the community, they're less likely to put up with crime," says Captain Thomas King of the 42nd precinct, which includes much of what was the "Fort Apache" territory in the 70s.

Another good sign is that many people who fled the area in the 70s are moving back. Casual observers often assume that only immigrants would be foolish enough to raise families in the South Bronx. It's true that other blighted areas of New York, such as Washington Heights and parts of south Brooklyn, have received massive waves of Dominican and African immigration in the past decade. The Bronx has had less, according to local housing groups and city agen-

Who's Who

By Susan Threadgill

Erik Tarloff has written what *The New York Times* describes as "a novel [that] takes a look at sexual philandering by a chief executive from the point of view of the cuckold." Tarloff had, as faithful readers of this column know, good reason to consider that point of view. In early 1993 we reported that **Bill Clinton** was taking a close look at more than the professional credentials of Tarloff's wife and Clinton's economic adviser, **Laura D'Andrea Tyson**. As things turned out, nothing came of the president's interest, except of course the idea for the novel.

As of mid-March, White House staffers were asking "where is **Sidney [Blumenthal]**? Very little has been seen of him since the impeachment trial ended in February.

Elizabeth Dole has been criticized for using her Red Cross job as a launching pad for her presidential bid. That prime-time Christmas Eve TV show featuring her cost the Red Cross $1.3 million to produce. And she hired as Red Cross employees, consultants, and board members such political influentials as **Stewart McLaurin** (who now runs Dole's new office), and the wives of **George Will** and **Dwayne Andreas**. On the other hand, to Dole's credit, *Money* magazine in 1996 named the Red Cross as the nation's best-run charity and **David Kessler**, the former head of the FDA who is now dean of the Yale Medical School, told *The Washington Post*, "I think she gets an 'A.'"

The White House must have felt a twinge of apprehension at learning that **Monica Lewinsky**'s media adviser was **Richard Carlson**. He happens to be the father of **Tucker Carlson**, the bright young conservative who regularly torments **Bill Clinton** on television talk shows and in his columns in *The Weekly Standard*.

It seems likely that **Peter Jennings**, **Dan Rather**, and **Tom Brokaw** are not all sleeping soundly these days. One of them must be doing a lot of tossing and turning. Why? **Larry Flynt** told *Salon* that he "would start investigating the private sex lives of media personalities," noting that a prominent anchor "is like a rabbit—I mean, he's got a revolving door to his office. And many of them have been divorced four or five times. A lot of the divorce transcripts are available."

One sign **Ken Starr**'s operation may be winding down is the departure of key members of his staff. **Solomon Wisenberg**, **Robert Bittman**, **Brett Kavanaugh**, and **Jackie M. Bennett** (a.k.a. "The Pit Bull and the Leaker") have abandoned ship. Also, Starr's spokesman, **Charles G. Bakaly III**, was fired. Veteran observers say these departures should lessen the pressure on Starr to continue the investigation since this pressure often comes from subordinates looking to make a name for themselves.

You might recall a few issues ago when we noted as an example of the journalistic high life that *Newsweek*'s **Michael Isikoff** was riding around in a limousine. Well, now we have this description

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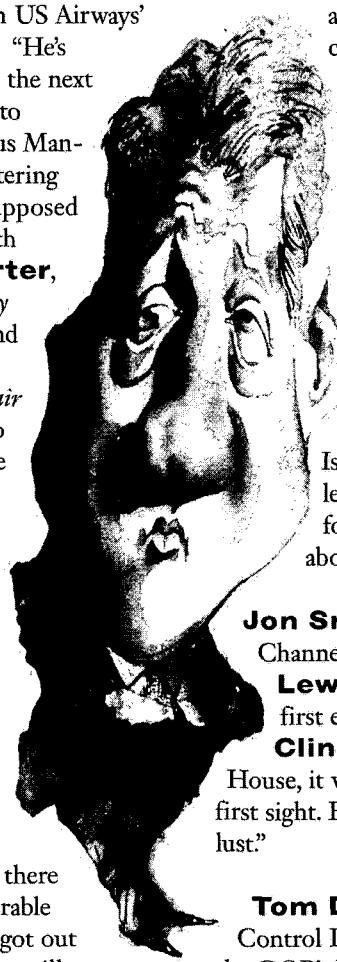
cies. Three quarters of the New York City Partnership's family homes in the South Bronx were bought by people already living in the borough. And many of the renters in the city's new buildings appear to be returned refugees. "A lot of people who moved away are now coming back," says James Anthony, a 52-year old man who moved away in 1969 when his wife put her foot down. Now they're back, living in a freshly renovated five-story building on 173rd street, just a few blocks from where they lived when the place began to burn. "I talk to people who grew up here, and they can't believe it when they see how nice it is."

There's no question that the South Bronx would not have revived if a core of resilient people hadn't stayed and proved that the place was worth saving. But it's important to remember that they couldn't have done the job without everybody's favorite whipping boy—Big Government. "I don't think [the city] has gotten its share of the credit," says Genevieve Brooks, who helped to found the CDC movement in the 70s. "No other city has made that kind of effort. They really did a fantastic job."

from *The Washington Post* of **Christopher Hitchens** as he hurries to catch US Airways' New York shuttle: "He's desperate to catch the next one so he can get to Elaine's, the famous Manhattan literary watering hole, where he's supposed to have dinner with **Graydon Carter**, his editor at *Vanity Fair* magazine. And he'd like to call ahead so *Vanity Fair* can send a limo to pick him up at the airport."



When Chief of Staff **Erskine Bowles** left the White House last fall, the impression given the public was that nobody in the White House was upset by his departure. In fact, there was and is considerable bitterness that he got out when the going was still tough.

Juanita Broadrick, just three weeks after her alleged rape by **Bill Clinton** in 1978, attended a Clinton fundraiser with her husband. In 1979 she accepted an advisory committee appointment by him. In 1984 she wrote Clinton a congratulatory letter, appending a handwritten note, "I admire you very much." Our friends tell us this is just like what **Anita Hill** did following **Clarence Thomas'** advances. Hmmm. Isn't rape considerably less forgivable and forgettable than talking about pubic hair?

Jon Snowe of Britain's Channel 4 asked **Monica Lewinsky** if, when she first encountered **Bill Clinton** at the White House, it was a case of love at first sight. Her reply: "No, no—lust."

Tom DeLay's Albo Pest Control Inc. may turn out to be the GOP's Whitewater. The first revelation by *The New Republic*, noted here last month, was that DeLay had given radically different versions of his role in the company in a court deposition and in a report to the House required by the Ethics in Government Act. Now **George Archibald** of *The Washington Times* has come out with evidence of a further failure to report to the House, in this case a court-awarded $32,000 debt. Archibald also notes that DeLay had not reported that he had paid an undisclosed sum to settle a suit accusing him of "saddling Albo with $110,000 of personal business debt and plundering company assets for his own benefit."

It seems that **Bill Clinton** shares the curiosity we expressed in a recent *Who's Who* as to why **Monica Lewinsky** threw such a fit at the White House gates when she learned that **Eleanor Mondale** was alone with him in the Oval Office. That night he called Monica and asked her why she was so upset. According to **Andrew Morton**'s new book, Monica replied by "citing the time when, while he was on a trip to California, Mondale had been with him until 3:30 in the morning, and had then gone running with him the next day." Clinton asked: "Do you think I would be stupid enough to go running with someone I was foolin' with?" Monica's instant reply: "Do you want me to answer that?"

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Memo *of the* Month

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 16, 1998

Ms. Patricia Fowlkes
Brookings Institution
1775 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036-2188

Dear Ms. Fowlkes:

Thank you for your kindness in sending Mike McCurry the book. Your gift was appreciated and was transmitted to our office to determine whether the staff member could retain it.

The Standards of Ethical Conduct applicable to White House employees prohibit receipt of gifts except under certain circumstances. In consultation with the Office of the Counsel to the President, it has been determined that the gift you sent may not be retained. I am, therefore, returning it.

Please be assured that your thoughtfulness is appreciated and that this decision in no way reflects on your kind intentions.

Sincerely,

Lori E. Abrams
Deputy Director
White House Gift Unit

Enclosure

cc: Mike McCurry

PSW, INC.

Dec. 2

Steve -

If you promise never to tell Ken Starr, I'm keeping your book and plan to enjoy it greatly, the Ethics in Government Act not witstanding.

If you had just sent under cover of a note from The Peoples Liberation army in Beijing, There would have been no problem!

Thanks. Looks like a zesty collaboration with Miss Manners. Hope our paths cross soon when I begin my new venture (address below) in Jan.

all the best,

Mike McCurry

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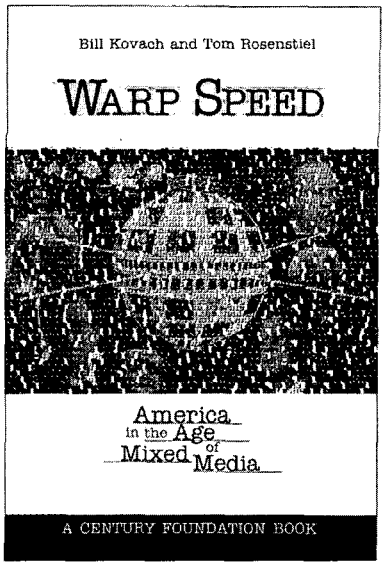

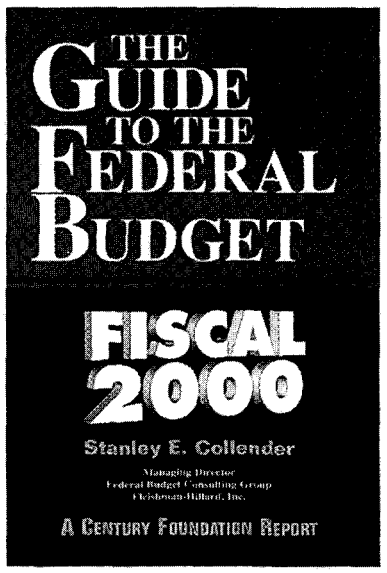

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Lessons Not Learned

What the military missed in Somalia

By Sean D. Naylor

BLACK HAWK DOWN
By Mark Bowden
Atlantic Monthly Press, $24.00

MARK BOWDEN HAS PRODUCED A SUPERB account of the October 1993 battle of Mogadishu. His graphic description of the fiercest firefight involving U.S. troops since the Vietnam war will resonate well beyond the military history enthusiasts who typically lap up such fare. Indeed, the most grateful beneficiaries of Bowden's labor should be found in the U.S. Army, many segments of which appear to have tried long and hard to forget that the battle ever occurred.

The basic outline of the battle was already well-known when Bowden began his research in 1997. On Oct. 3, 1993, several helicopter-loads of Rangers and "Delta Force" commandos roped into the Somali capital's "Black Sea" neighborhood to seize two senior aides to warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. The United States, in the form of the 450-man Task Force Ranger, was engaged in an undeclared guerrilla war with Aidid's Habr Gidr clan, and this was the task force's seventh such raid. None had turned up Aidid himself, who had gone to ground when the United Nations placed a bounty on his head. But after some early missteps the task force had begun steadily to take down Aidid's organizational structure.

The Oct. 3 mission was proceeding well until Aidid's militia shot down first one, then a second of the task force's Black Hawk helicopters. Instead of heading straight back to their base with their detainees in a ground convoy, the 100-odd Rangers and Delta commandos were forced to hunker down around the first crash site, as Aidid's forces converged on them from across the city. A series of convoys were dispatched to relieve the cut-off troops, only to be driven back by withering fire. By the time U.S. commanders had linked up U.S. infantry forces with Malaysian and Pakistani armored vehicles to form a convoy with enough firepower to get to the stricken special operators and pull them out, 18 U.S. soldiers had been killed or mortally wounded, and the Clinton administration's nation-building strategy in Somalia lay in tatters.

Most of Bowden's book consists of a dramatic blow-by-blow account of the 16-hour drama played out in the labyrinthine alleyways and dusty boulevards near the Bakara Market, the center of Aidid's power base. Drawing on radio transcripts and interviews with dozens of participants, he painstakingly recreates each moment of the battle, lacing the vignettes together with biographical sketches of the fighters and a history of the U.S. peacemaking effort in Somalia. The book is full of examples of extraordinary heroism in the face of almost overwhelming odds.

However, the story is no one-sided affair. Bowden deserves credit for taking the time—and the risks involved—to travel to Mogadishu, where he interviewed many Somalis who fought in or witnessed the battle. Their perspectives enrich an already enthralling narrative. But beyond being a riveting description of what might be called the first battle of the 21st century, the book contains serious, if understated, implications for the U.S. military—and particularly the Army—as it seeks to refashion itself for the post-Cold War era. The most important of these, notes Maj. David Stockwell, who was the U.S. military's

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SEAN D. NAYLOR *is is a senior writer for* Army Times, *and co-author of* Clash of Chariots: The Great Tank Battles. *He covered U.S. military operations in Somalia in 1992, 1993 and 1994.*

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spokesman in Mogadishu at the time, is that "There are limits to applying high technology on a low-tech battlefield."

It should be clear from *Black Hawk Down* that the sort of battlefields preferred by the U.S. military—empty but for friendly and enemy troops—are increasingly a thing of the past. They are being replaced by the shantytowns and urban sprawl of disintegrating societies such as Somalia, Bosnia and Haiti. Mogadishu happened to be the location for this wake-up call, but it could just as easily have been Basra, Brcko or Port-au-Prince. Certain in the knowledge that the United States' commitment to counter all but the most direct threats to its national security can be undermined by inflicting a handful of casualties, America's enemies will seek close, personal and brutal battle with U.S. forces in urban areas that threaten to make a mockery of the Pentagon's obsession with Stealth bombers, Seawolf submarines and "digitized" tanks.

Since the battle, the Army has made belated efforts to give its troops the decision-making skills they will need to cope in environments like Mogadishu, in which the line that traditionally separates fighters from non-combatants becomes blurred to the point of invisibility. But it is questionable whether any amount of training can fully prepare young Americans—the average age of the Rangers in the battle was 19—for situations such as that which faced Specialist Eric Spalding, who was engaged at close range by a woman holding a pistol in one hand and a baby in the other. (He shot the woman, but suspected he hit the infant as well.)

During the 1990s, the Army has embarked on a multi-billion dollar effort to "digitize" the battlefield, using a "tactical Internet" of hand-held and vehicle-mounted laptop computers and position navigation systems to give soldiers and commanders a better sense of their surroundings. But, as Bowden makes clear, video relayed by helicopters and a Navy spy plane gave U.S. commanders at Task Force Ranger headquarters a perfect, real time view of the battle unfolding in Mogadishu. Yet despite this advantage, unprecedented in military history, they proved unable to direct one of the convoys a matter of a few blocks to the first crash site. The saga of "the lost convoy," which meandered through ambush after ambush, taking heavy casualties, before returning to the base, should give pause to those who believe that perfect "situational awareness" will sweep away the fog of war.

Nowhere was the U.S. military's overreliance on high technology more exposed during the Mogadishu fight than in the area of intelligence. Despite having access to every national intelligence asset, Task Force Ranger detected neither the Aidid militia's ability to swiftly mass fighters on an objective, nor the threat that the militia's hoarded supplies of rocket-propelled grenades posed to the helicopters that were Task Force Ranger's center of gravity. Aidid, on the other hand, had intelligence agents working as local hires at the U.S. bases, and some U.S. personnel believed, was receiving tip-offs about impending Task Force Ranger missions from Italian troops under United Nations command.

What the task force needed was better contacts in Aidid's militia, but the United States' capability to gather human intelligence in relatively closed societies is weak. (One of the book's few flaws is its failure to examine what role, if any, was played by the secret Army military intelligence unit sometimes referred to as "The Army of Virginia." This unit, based at Fort Belvoir, Va., and Fort Meade, Md., often works closely with Delta, but its participation in Mogadishu would have been circumscribed by the Clinton administration's determination to limit the size of the task force.)

This intelligence failure was compounded by the hubris displayed by the elite U.S. troops. Such was the overconfidence of the special operations forces that many took off that sunny afternoon without their night vision devices, bayonets, or even full canteens, so certain were they that the mission would go smoothly and they would be back within an hour. Bowden reveals that even the combat search and rescue team that landed at the first of the two crash sites had originally been cut from the task force roster prior to leaving the States, because the chances of the Somalis shooting down a helicopter were considered so slim. "Nobody had anticipated a serious fight from these characters," he writes.

Bowden is perhaps too easy on those at every echelon of command, from President Clinton down to the lieutenant colonels running the battle. Rarely does he pin any blame on anyone. Yet someone, somewhere, was responsible for agreeing to the fractured chain of command in which the two senior U.S. military officers in Mogadishu were two major generals in command of separate U.S. military organizations, neither of whom had command over the other.

Violations of the principle of unity of command also occurred within Task Force Ranger itself. Bowden points out that the Delta commandos and the Rangers each had their own chains of command, their own separate radio links and their own ways of doing

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things. When things turned nasty on the ground, the friction between Delta and the Rangers meant that for a time, the captain commanding the Ranger troops refused to talk to the Delta captain on the radio. Bowden acknowledges that the absence of a clear chain of command on the ground was "a significant oversight," but leaves unsaid whose mistake this was. In fact, it is an indictment of task force commander Major General William Garrison, who should have ensured that a more senior officer was on the ground to take charge.

The Army's reaction to the battle of Mogadishu exemplifies much of what is amiss with the service at the turn of the century. In survey after survey, soldiers and officers alike agree that the service has developed a "zero-defect" culture in which caution and careerism have replaced boldness and audacity. Task Force Ranger achieved a Pyrrhic victory in Mogadishu, and the Army has been trying to sweep the event under the carpet ever since. Several officers who fought in the battle have seen their careers sidelined, and report feeling that the service has failed to recognize their sacrifice, or even to learn the correct lessons from it. That is a serious accusation in a service that prides itself on its "lessons learned" process. But it appears to be true.

The Center for Army Lessons Learned produced no report on the battle, and those accounts that have been written within the military are highly classified. As Bowden points out, "It seems the military is best at keeping secrets from itself." If his book can open a few eyes peering out from Kevlar helmets, it will have rendered an invaluable service. ●

God and Mammon

The free market is less "conservative" than you think

By Jonathan Rowe

THE NOTION OF A CONSERVATIVE CRITIQUE of the market can jar the contemporary mind, a little like a left-wing critique of the state. But that suggests the tenacity of Cold War stereotypes and a media that is conceptually inert. Suspicion of the market is conservative in the most fundamental sense. It can arise from a desire for true economy, as opposed to the wastrel and debt-driven tendencies of the consumer culture. It can express a desire to protect that which is of great value, whether in the social structure or the natural environment, against the machinations of pecuniary gain.

TURBO-CAPITALISM: Winners and Losers in the Global Economy
By Edward Luttwak
HarperCollins, $26

As it sprang from Adam Smith's mind, the concept of the market was deliberately disruptive—a radical force. It served to rout the residues of feudalism—the traditional bonds of locality and community—and clear the way for the industrial age, with its mathematical logic of production and gain. This was not a conservative undertaking. But soon enough it acquired the respectability of money; and this forced true conservatives into the role of radicals, for opposing the radicalism of money which was now the status quo.

In this century, few names evoke more ire in free market circles than those of John Kenneth Galbraith and Ralph Nader. Yet it would be hard to find two people more devoted to the traditional economic verities of hard work, frugality, practicality and thrift. Galbraith, the son of a Scotch-Canadian farmer, took issue with the inherent wastefulness of the postwar consumer economy. If it took a massive advertising industry (over $200 billion today) to maintain what economists quaintly call "demand", he wrote, then perhaps that spending wasn't as urgent as market theory posits. Perhaps the time had come to shift some of those resources to undertakings for which the need is indisputably great—parks, schools, decaying inner cities, and the like.

Nader looked at products the way Henry Ford did—from the standpoint of practicality and sound

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engineering. He argued that technology such as automobiles should be, first and foremost, functional and safe. (Ford resisted style changes and selling on credit.) But there are grandfather rights in the wars of ideological cliché. Those who claim first the imprimatur of state policy get title to the mantle of "conservative".

So people like Galbraith and Nader were excoriated as proto-statists, and also as "Puritans" and economic "prudes", as though the traditional values of our Pilgrim forebears are somehow disreputable when applied to the economic realm.

Among those who identify themselves as conservatives, concern about the market has focused mainly on the social structure. Such writers tend to hold the market in wary and ambiguous embrace. Yes, it provides a channel for invention and enterprise, which are forms of freedom. Yes, it is a bulwark against the state. But it also degrades what it touches and is corrosive of traditional values and mores.

In the 1950s, Russell Kirk sounded these themes gently in his magisterial *The Conservative Mind*, in which he called the automobile the "mechanical Jacobin." Around the same time, Wilhelm Roepke, a compatriot of Hayek and von Mises, the libertarian icons, wrote a book called *The Humane Economy* which argued the need to keep the market within the bounds of its proper task. "Of what avail is any amount of well-being," Roepke wrote, "if at the same time, we steadily render the world more vulgar, uglier, noisier, and drearier and if men lose the moral and spiritual foundations of their existence?"

This is a conservative speaking, one year before Galbraith published *The Affluent Society*. Today, most so-called conservatives are not so forthright. A Dan Quayle strikes heroic postures against easy targets like Murphy Brown, without acknowledging that he is attacking a pure manifestation of the market that he rhapsodizes on other days.

But quietly the more principled conservatism survives, and evidence of this is *Turbo Capitalism: Winners and Losers in the Global Economy* by Edward Luttwak. Luttwak is a Senior Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., and the affiliation is significant. Unlike the acolytes at Heritage, Cato, and the rest, he is not a secular theologian. He sees the market as a qualified good rather than an absolute one, a means to an end but not an end in itself.

In the past, Luttwak says, a number of forces served to keep the market somewhat within the compass of social good. Government provided both restraint and counterweight, the limits of technology slowed the pace of change, and national boundaries served to ground enterprise somewhat in particular communities and locales. Today these tethers have frayed almost to the breaking point, especially in the United States and England, which spawned the reigning economic doctrine and are its most dutiful adherents. Less government, more technology and mobility, the eradication of national boundaries, commerce at the speed of light—these are the Nirvana of the conventional economic mind, the bliss of Pure Efficiency.

To Luttwak they are ominous. He sees "accelerated structural change, producing more creation and more destruction, more efficiency and more inequality," and a growing sense among the populace of being constantly under siege. There is also a growing sense of helplessness, because the reigning ideology of the market both calls these changes good and "reduces the sphere of democratic control," and therefore the possibility of addressing them.

Luttwak calls this phenomenon "turbo capitalism", and the term is a bit unfortunate, suggesting as it does a scholar's desire to slip into the pop lexicon. The question he raises is basic. Does a society reach a point at which material gains—if gains they are—are no longer worth the price of social tension and individual upheaval? Is a society a mere staging ground for an economy, a supplier of the "human capital" that efficiency requires? Or should an economy serve larger social ends? Economists, Luttwak says—and by this he means the reigning policy mind—"simply ignore the possibility that people might actually prefer to live in a country where the economy is somewhat less efficient than it could be."

As an example, Luttwak discusses the differences between European and American cities. The former generally have licensing regimes which protect small merchants, and controls on development which make the destruction of old buildings virtually impossible. (In Paris the high rises have been relegated to the outskirts of the city, along with the slums.) Shops generally close early in the evening. It is hard to get approval for big box stores or chains. To free market clerics such measures are heresies and abominations. But then, would you rather live in Paris or Houston? Which would you rather visit?

The licensing restrictions protect small shopkeepers and family businesses—the heart of the urban middle class. The required closing times make it possible to operate a small business and still get home for dinner and help the kids do their home-

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work. The restrictions on development ease the chronic anxiety that American city dwellers feel, that the wrecking balls might show up in their neighborhood any day. Parisians, Romans, and others hardly lead bucolic lives. "But among them one constantly feels that their strong sense of belonging to their cities leaves their happiness far less dependent on the size of their disposable income," Luttwak observes. American cities are congenial for real estate fortunes. But they are "much less of a home for their inhabitants."

For all the speechifying in the United States about family values, there is little talk about the economic arrangements that make stable family lives possible—and much sanctifying of the economic forces that disrupt them. The market concept can enhance life, but it can be destructive when it becomes life. People cannot move at nanosecond speed like currency speculations. We need stability as well as motion, slowness as well as speed.

Luttwak talks about employment in a similar vein. The Japanese are notorious for employing more people than necessary, especially in retail businesses which are immune to competition from abroad. In department stores shoppers experience a kind of doting attention that is unimaginable in the United States (where there is often no service at all.) Drive into a gas station and a team of attendants appears to clean your windshield and fill your tank. Yes, gas is expensive in Japan, and other products too. But we pay for everything we get one way or another, as the old saying goes. In the United States the gas station crew is standing on a street corner instead, getting into trouble. The gas in the United States is "expensively cheap," Luttwak observes. The economic efficiency of self-service stations comes at the price of "social inefficiencies" which are apparent daily to most Americans who have eyes to see.

When economists boast that the US has a higher "standard of living," Luttwak says, they are revealing their myopia. In a nation such as Japan people enjoy "society-wide and personal benefits that may count for much more—even in purely monetary terms."

The pieties of trade can be myopic too. Cheap imports come at a price: the decimation of factory towns, and the loss of the production jobs that enabled the Chester A. Rileys of postwar America to climb into the middle class. If the goal is family stability, community and traditional values, as social conservatives say, then why conduct the economy as though the sole purpose is to pile up more stuff in the garage?

Most economists will rise up in indignation. Economics is like physics they say, comprised of immutable laws. What was true yesterday must be true forever. Luttwak argues in effect that economics is an historical process, and as needs change policy must change with it. In poor countries free trade might be a boon. In affluent countries, however, there is plenty of stuff but also increasing poverty among the most vulnerable. In such circumstances "it is not necessarily a good idea to enrich the kingdom by replacing three [workers] with one, and leaving the other two sitting still."

An economy isn't just a machine for producing stuff and stuff equivalents called "services." Luttwak points out that it also is a social system. It produces human interaction and social mores; it sends messages to people regarding whether they are useful or just excess baggage. An economy has a social product as well as a material one. Today we live in a hypersaturated consumer economy in which material needs are paltry but social needs are great. Does it still make sense to cannibalize the social product we desperately need, for the sake of a material product that we don't?

This is where the Galbraith of *The Affluent Society* meets a William Bennett or a Pat Buchanan (though not with enthusiasm on either side one suspects.) On occasion Luttwak musters a delicious Galbraithian barb. "The god of the market-worshippers [who] celebrate the glories turbo-capitalism is Adam Smith," he writes, "but theirs is a devotion that depends crucially on not reading him." On the whole, he writes with a measured fair-mindedness. He is fully aware of the appeals of market fundamentalism—the innovation, the excitement, the constant change. But he asks, over and over, whether the fruits, such as they are, are always worth the social price.

Perhaps his most suggestive point concerns the political implications of the new economic disorder. In times of economic turmoil, he says, when people feel their lives spinning out of control and the political system provides no channels of redress, they transpose their need to assert control to other areas of life instead. Fascism, Luttwak says, represents the "non-economic expression of economic dissatisfactions." Is it totally accidental that as the US becomes more permissive in the economic arena it becomes correspondingly uptight in regards to other forms of personal behavior? We coddle greed but burn lust at the stake (except when it is enlisted in the service of greed, in advertising for example.) The Right wants to stop abortion and sic the cops on sex. The Left comes down on smoking, deodor-

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ants and even Chinese food. Meanwhile the Barmicide feast on Wall Street continues and the gap between rich and poor grows wider by the day. The militias of the Upper Midwest, we might note, consist largely of men whom the new economy has declared useless. Out of control, they try to reassert it; declared useless, they strive to find a role.

"Free markets and less-free societies go hand in hand," Luttwak says (and one can almost hear the snarls and growls at *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page). By contrast, nations such as Italy and France which keep the market on a tighter leash, have a more relaxed attitude towards individual behavior. To which a Pat Robertson might say, "Exactly." But the point might be a caution to the *Wired* magazine cyber-libs who think they can have their cake and eat it too—unfettered cowboy capitalism and out-of-my-face social policy as well.

Luttwak was born in Transylvania during World War II and was raised in Italy. Presumably he is more attuned than most Americans to the social implications of economic disruption. But his European background can be a disadvantage, too. Luttwak focuses almost exclusively on government as counterweight to the market, for example. He might have given more attention to the informal realms of neighborhood and community—such as the way traditional Main Streets serve to leaven commerce with community and civic concerns. This is the basic bulwark in America, and it is no less threatened by the trends against which Luttwak rightly cautions.

I wish too that Luttwak had given more weight to environmental concerns. But if he doesn't make the environmental case he provides the social complement to it, the other half of the synthesis that is waiting to happen. "While the natural environment is increasingly safeguarded by severe limits on business as well as personal activities," he writes, "the social environment is increasingly left to the free fire zone of private business." One might question just how "severe" those restrictions really are given the magnitude of the problem.

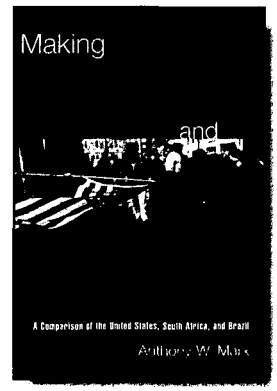
But he's basically right. The law is more protective of the quality of the air than of the society that takes place in it. A corporation can incur a big fine if it dumps its atmospheric toxics outside the school. But it can dump its commercial toxics inside the school through vehicles like Channel One, with total impunity.

It is no accident, therefore, that Ralph Nader has joined with such groups as the Family Research Council, until recently the roost of Gary Bauer, and Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum to oppose Channel One. It is no accident either that those who rose to the defense of Channel One included Grover Norquist, the Right-wing tax cutter, and Ralph Reed, the Republican politico who recently stepped down as head of the Christian Coalition. Much as environmentalists split from Keynesian growth-boosters on the Left in the '60s and '70s, so today, genuine social conservatives are splitting from the libertarians and Mammon's helpers on the Right. Slowly a new politics is emerging, a politics that seeks to re-establish the boundaries of the market in both environmental and social terms. This politics is conservative in the most fundamental sense, but appears radical for opposing the radicalism of money.

It took Nixon to go to China and Clinton to change welfare. Perhaps it will take a conservative to explain this new politics and prod the opinion establishment to acknowledge it. Edward Luttwak has offered a large contribution to this end.

"...a tour de force."
— Charles Tilly, Columbia University

Making Race and Nation
A Comparison of the United States, South Africa and Brazil
Anthony W. Marx



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Giving Away the Farm

Why privatization won't solve Social Security's problems

By Jonathan Chait

SOCIAL SECURITY'S CRITICS MAKE MUCH OF the program's age. It is a relic of the New Deal, designed during a depressed era when people died younger, and trusted the market less, than they do today. And if you really want to make Social Security look dated, you point out that its basic blueprint comes from Otto von Bismark. The implication of these historical references is perfectly clear: If we could reconstruct our retirement system from scratch, would it really be the same as the Social Security designed for dusty-faced Okies and spiked-helmeted Prussians? Brookings scholars Henry Aaron and Robert Reischauer take up this conventional question, but their unconventional answer is, Yes, pretty much.

COUNTDOWN TO REFORM: The Great Social Security Debate
By Henry J. Aaron & Robert D. Reischauer
Century Foundation Book, $12.95

That might not sound like such a radical notion. But step back into the debate as it existed before they produced this logical, fair, and persuasive primer, and the apostasy of the book becomes clear. Everybody knows that, when the baby boom generation retires, Social Security will begin to face large deficits unless it is reformed. And everybody also knows that Social Security is the third rail of politics—an entitlement so popular that politicians dare not propose the reforms necessary for its survival. These things have been true for so long now that they have come to define the program entirely. When you think of Social Security, you do not think of a successful system of social insurance that has kept millions of people out of poverty. You think of a budget-gobbling entitlement program propped up by greedy geezers and feckless or demagogic politicians. Social Security—due, in large part, to the excesses of its own defenders—has become a bit tacky.

This intellectual evolution has given conservatives an opportunity. They have always detested Social Security, both for its collectivist nature and the political benefits it bestows upon the Democratic Party, but never had the guts to say so in public. Now Social Security's declining prestige, and the generally agreed-upon need to reform it, have allowed conservatives to say out loud what they have always thought in the comfort of their seminars and college newspapers: Social Security should be privatized, in whole or in part. What began as the hobby-horse of a few isolated right-wing intellectuals has become a clamor for private accounts from think tanks and members of Congress. The question of reforming Social Security has become a question of privatizing Social Security.

Now, you may detect an incongruity here. Social Security's ailments derive from the fact that, without changes, it will eventually pay out more in benefits than it collects in taxes. This is not a problem of philosophy, it is a problem of application—one that can be fixed with some tweaks. Privatization, though, is not a change in application, it is a change in philosophy. It is not a way to solve Social Security's fiscal shortfall; rather, it is designed to convert it from a system of social insurance into a system of atomized personal accounts much like IRAs. This distinction is the key to reforming the program. There is a consensus that Social Security needs some sort of change to stay out of the red, but only the right-wing believes it is fundamentally misguided. Privatization advocates, realizing this, carefully couch their proposals in the language of fixing Social Security rather than replacing it.

The privatizers have succeeded in this so well that they have brought their ideas to the center of the political debate with few people understanding what is at stake. Aaron and Reischauer's main contribution is to disentangle these two matters, to consider the merits of social insurance and the problem of closing Social Security's deficit as separate questions. And by doing so in a careful and systematic way, they demon-

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strate that social insurance—that is, a system like the one we have now—is vastly preferable to a privatized one, and they also lay out a more than adequate proposal to save it from insolvency.

Consider the various ways in which a private system differs from Social Security as it exists. Imagine that, instead of sending payroll taxes to the government, you put them into a private account that you controlled personally. Basically, you would accumulate a pile of money, and then live off of it when you retire. Of course, this would mean that people who earned more money or invested it more shrewdly would get higher benefits. But there would also be other inequalities, based on far more random factors. If you invested a large chunk of your account in stocks, then the state of the market in the year in which you retired would have an enormous impact upon your retirement income. If we were to design a retirement program from scratch, why on earth would we want to include such a seemingly random feature?

There are yet more unpleasant aspects to a private system. If you control your own account, you have one lump sum to parcel out for as long as you may live, always taking care not to run the risk of outliving your savings. (You can avoid this dilemma by annuitizing a private pension, but since annuity-purchasers tend to live longer, insurance companies charge a steep premium for this service.) Also, under a privatized system, two workers who earned the same average wages over their careers and invested the exact same way could have very different pensions. Why? Because earning money earlier in your life is much more profitable than earning it later in life, due to the power of compounding interest. There's also the hard-to-foresee impact of inflation, which would eat away large chunks of some people's retirement income, while others would get off easy. Even if we are willing to let higher earners and smarter investors enjoy more generous public pensions than everybody else, it's hard to justify vast inequalities brought about by nothing more than pure luck.

None of these random hazards exist under the current arrangement. Social Security benefits are based on a set formula that is indexed to inflation. It pays benefits as a monthly stipend, without regard to life expectancy or the state of the market when you retired. If the goal of Social Security is to provide, well, social security, then this seems a more rational way to go about it than a system of every-man-for-himself.

A second way a private system would differ from Social Security is that it would not allow for redistribution. Social Security provides higher returns for lower earners. For instance, $30,000 earners pay half the payroll taxes of $60,000 earners, but receive benefits only 29 percent smaller. Social Security also diverts some of its benefits to survivors, spouses, and disabled workers. These kinds of transfers, from rich to poor and from lucky to unlucky, can only happen because all Social Security taxes go into one big pot. If everybody controls their own account, then you can't redistribute the money. And if you partially privatize the system—by diverting some of the payroll tax from public to private accounts—then you reduce the amount of funding available for the social assistance component.

What, then, is the appeal of a private system? The one incontrovertible advantage is individual control. If you are offended at the notion of a government-guaranteed retirement income and believe that individuals should take responsibility for their own welfare, then privatizing Social Security is a way of enhancing personal freedom. This is the honest argument for privatization, adhered to by hard-core libertarians. But of course most people don't consider Social Security to be inherently immoral, and so the privatizers have devised a more popular, but less cogent, rationale: A private system will save Social Security from its looming deficits and give workers a higher return on their taxes. But look more closely, and the claims don't hold up.

There are several ways to partially or completely privatize Social Security, but none of them does anything to stave off its budgetary ills. Most plans to phase in a private system would allow current workers to keep their payroll taxes in personal accounts, instead of supporting current beneficiaries. How do we get the money to pay current beneficiaries? Well, you have to raise taxes. But if you can raise all that new tax money, then Social Security doesn't face a deficit anymore. The only way privatization saves Social Security is by doing something—raising taxes—that could be done without privatization.

The most popular partial privatization idea—such as the one put forth by Senators Phil Gramm and Pete Domenici—would use the budget surplus to fund new individual accounts. For every dollar individuals earned in their private accounts, their Social Security benefits would be reduced by 75 or 80 cents, which would save the government money. The trouble is, the funding source for those accounts—the budget surplus—is temporary. When it dries up in a decade or so, the budget would have a massive shortfall to make up, which it could only do by raising taxes, cutting benefits, or going very deeply into debt.

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This plan, then, would just create a new predicament that's identical to the one we already have.

So privatization, whatever its strengths and weaknesses, is not a way to save Social Security. But what about the higher yields? Right now, our Social Security taxes earn a puny rate of return. Imagine—the privatizers ask—if we could keep that money and invest it in the stock market instead!

It is true that your payroll taxes earn a low rate of return. In part, though, this is due to circumstances we can't, or shouldn't, avoid. A portion of our payroll taxes goes to pay off current beneficiaries, who receive more generous benefits than future retirees will. That may be wrong, but not even the most radical privatizers propose to change that. And another portion is siphoned off to subsidize people who paid little or nothing into the system. We could take back that money, too, but that would mean cutting off crippled steelworkers and widowed housewives.

The biggest reason for Social Security's low rate of return, though, is that the trust fund is invested only in low-yielding Treasury bills, whereas individual accounts could select more lucrative investments, like stocks. And so, if the Social Security Trust Fund must confine its reserves to low-yield federal bonds, then a private system can indeed offer higher returns, at least in the aggregate.

But Aaron and Reischauer suggest this needn't be the case. They lay out a plan by which the Trust Fund could invest a portion of its reserves in private equities. By offering high returns to Social Security, of course, this would rob advocates of individual accounts of their strongest argument.

Naturally, this plan—since adopted by President Clinton—has drawn fierce opposition from privatizaters, who argue that it would lead to state control of private industry. Anticipating this objection, Aaron and Reischauer propose multiple safeguards against political interference: the establishment of an independent, Federal Reserve-like body to handle the investing. Its governors would serve long, staggered terms to assure their independence, would be self-funding, and hire private managers on a competitive basis to invest only in passive index funds, on which the Trust Fund would forfeit all voting rights. I count seven firewalls against political interference, which would make the new board more independent than the Federal Reserve (which is a far more tempting target for political interference). Conservatives thus far have refused even to consider the plan, hysterically dismissing it as socialism. No doubt they are also aware that any plan that would allow for higher rates of return without creating individual accounts would undercut the strongest argument for privatization.

Aaron and Reischauer have taken some criticism for the last section of the book, which compares various reform plans. (Their own gets the highest mark; hence the sneering). But the truth is, if you judge by criteria such as equitable benefits and sharing of risk—the basic notions of social insurance—then keeping the essential structure of Social Security makes far more sense than privatizing it. If critics place less of a value on social insurance than on the possibility of greater wealth for certain individuals, as seems to be the case, then that is the argument they ought to make. ●

FOLLOW IN FAMOUS FOOTSTEPS...

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Political Booknotes

Cuckolded

By Walter Shapiro

When I was invited to review this book, I was already so predisposed to like *Face-Time* that I had mentally packed it as beach reading for my upcoming post-impeachment vacation. My advance enthusiasm for this comic novel had been whetted by a combination of affectionate reviews, and the droll pedigree of author Erik Tarloff, a Hollywood screenwriter who had been treated to a spouse-of-an-insider (his wife is Laura Tyson, the former head of the Council of Economic Advisors) view of Clinton's first term. Adding to my anticipation were the broad outlines of a plot that seemed an over-the-top summation of all White House sex scandals: What is it like when it is your own live-in girlfriend who is the one having the affair with the president?

FACE-TIME
by Erik Tarloff
Crown Publishers, $23

Maybe my high expectations for *Face-Time* were unfair to Tarloff, who by all accounts is a nice guy. But his novel on the printed page never came close to matching the one that I had been savoring in my imagination. Unlike, say, Christopher Buckley's laugh-out-loud classic, *Thank You For Smoking*, Tarloff's novel barely triggers a wry smile, let alone uncontrollable giggles.

Of course, humor isn't everything to *Monthly* readers, especially if a novel limns a deft portrait of life along the corridors of power. Here again *Face Time* falls exasperatingly short, despite the clever wordplay of its title. (In Washington lingo, "face time" normally refers to the ultimate coin of the realm —direct face-to-face access to the president). But while Tarloff does have some interesting insights about the sexual allure inherent in modern presidential power, he repeats them every 20 pages or so without ever moving on to another level of truth.

The story line is tersely established in the five-page opening chapter. Ben and Gretchen are 30-ish political operatives who met and fell in love while working on the winning presidential campaign of Democratic Sen. Charles Sheffield, a married politician who, aside from one glaring weakness, boasts no discernible similarities to Bill Clinton. Now Ben and Gretchen have been rewarded with White House jobs (he's a presidential speechwriter and she works in the social office), share an apartment near Dupont Circle and boast "an ideal Washington life." That is, aside from what Ben, the novel's narrator, describes as "one awkward fact: Gretchen is fucking the president of the United States. And I don't know what the hell to do about it."

Nearly 200 pages later, Ben still doesn't know what to do about it. And that is the awkward fact about *Face-Time*: After this bang-up beginning, it doesn't go anywhere. Instead of comic hijinks, we get the White House version of "Friends." Ben belatedly discovers the affair; he and Gretchen have long soulful talks about their relationship; Ben tries to live with his girlfriend's dual loyalties; his White House career prospers; and finally there is the bittersweet resolution. There is a creepy claustrophobia to the novel, since this is a story with only three real characters—the doomed lovers and the lustful president. Ben's rivalry with his one-time friend, Randy, the chief speechwriter, has the makings of a promising subplot, but this secondary story line peters out halfway through the movie... whoops!... novel.

Nearly 30 years ago, George Reedy, a disgruntled former LBJ press secretary, depicted the monarchical trappings of the modern White House in *The Twilight of the Presidency*. As Reedy wrote with rare prescience, "The life of a White House is the life of a court. It is a structure designed for one purpose and one purpose only—to serve the material needs and the desires of a single man." Tarloff, I suspect, never read Reedy's trenchant diatribe. But the sole virtue of *Face-Time* is that it reworks Reedy's analysis in a fictional format. In one of Ben's interior monologues, which comprise the bulk of the novel, he muses, "The president is an interesting and able man, undoubtedly, but does he really merit the deferential kowtowing that is shown him as a matter of course? If he didn't have the mantle of the presidency about him, would any of us think of him as anything special?"

Most of *Face-Time* can be seen as foreplay leading up to the inevitable confrontation between Ben and the president that he (and especially Gretchen) so loyally serve. Fiction allows Tarloff to imagine what might have been Clinton's self-justifying response had a White House aide (certainly not the gullible Sidney Blumenthal) ever had the moxie to challenge the president on his heedless sexual conduct. "Certain types of people gain the presidency," President Sheffield tells Ben. "And once they get it, whatever qualities they had in the first place are considerably enhanced. There's a sexual component to leadership. Some modicum of sexual appeal comes with the territory, and a sexual aura surrounds it. Engulfs it. You want to fight that? Why not command the tides while you're at it?"

On second thought, Clinton lacks the ironic detachment to ever make this every-president-does-it counterargument. But Monica Lewinsky, of all people, pinpointed the sense of sexual entitlement that comes with being president. In one of her marathon conversations with wired-world Linda Tripp, Monica declared, "Every president, every (REDACTED) president we have ever had has always had lovers because the pressure of the job is too much. Too much. Too much to always rely on your wife, with whom you have too much baggage, which you inevitably will if you got to that point.

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And I think it's bad for the country."

What's bad for the country isn't an over-stressed president cruelly deprived of extra-marital sexual outlets by a puritanical press corps. The problem is an Imperial Presidency that seduces our elected leaders into believing that they are Nietzschean supermen immune to the constraints on ordinary mortals. For all his populist pretensions, Clinton loves the puffed-up pomp of the presidency as much as Ronald Reagan did. To his credit, Tarloff in *Face-Time* shrewdly understands that something has gone terribly wrong with our democracy—and that the moral failings of Bill Clinton are a symptom of this malady, not its cause. That's why I find it so exasperating that *Face-Time* isn't a better novel.

WALTER SHAPIRO, *a contributing editor for* The Washington Monthly, *is a political columnist for* USA Today.

Nomads

by Douglas McGray

I HAD BEEN SITTING IN A LOCAL coffeehouse for most of an afternoon before I noticed the photographs on the wall. A small child posed in the dim light of a railroad box car. A young boy's face crowded another frame, all eyes and matted bangs. Each of the half-dozen shots in the series depicted a scene from an abandoned train in Cakovec, Croatia, where refugees were taking shelter from the war in Yugoslavia.

LOST ON EARTH:
Nomads of the New World
by Mark Fritz
Little, Brown, $25

These kinds of images have become familiar in the 1990s, a decade in which an unprecedented number of people have left their homes in search of safety, political freedom, or a better wage. Photographers and television crews have captured waves of refugees fleeing violence in Kinshasa and Sarajevo and rafts depositing waterlogged asylum-seekers on the shores of Italy and the Florida Keys. But if the camera lens has made these crises real for millions of Americans and prompted a harder government line on some human rights abusers, it has also tended to keep its subjects at a safe distance—dramatically rendered, appropriately framed.

Los Angeles Times correspondent Mark Fritz challenges this voyeurism in an ambitious, if uneven new collection of political reportage, *Lost on Earth: Nomads of the New World.* Fritz, who won a Pulitzer prize in 1994 for his reporting from Rwanda, chronicles moments from the lives of ordinary people—relief workers and refugees, immigrants and xenophobes, soldiers and prisoners of war—caught up in the immigration and refugee crises that followed the end of the Cold War.

Lost on Earth opens in the waning years of East German communism. By 1989, Budapest was only half-heartedly enforcing the Eastern Bloc's strict travel restrictions. Tens of thousands of defectors were slipping through Hungary to the West.

Most of the first half of *Lost on Earth* is set at least partially in Germany, as is the very end, a moving account of the war in Bosnia. Germany's liberal asylum policies, massive influx of foreigners, socioeconomic disparities, and racial tensions provide Fritz with an apt window on the world of the '90s. When wars erupted in the Balkans and the Persian Gulf, more refugees arrived on Germany's doorstep than anywhere else in Europe. When cracks appeared in the Soviet edifice, ethnic Germans whose ancestors had emigrated to Russia during the reign of Catherine the Great clamored to return. Fritz's reporting from Rwanda, Liberia, and Somalia, however, takes the second half of *Lost on Earth* far afield. Although his chapters on Africa produce vivid characters, it is unclear how they add to the book. Too often, they read like a grim collection of postcards.

Fritz is at his best when he focuses on the personal lives of individual immigrants and refugees. One of them, Robert Mukisa, a writer with a college degree, flees Uganda and declares asylum in Frankfurt when his political party is banned. But in truth, Mukisa leaves Uganda in search of opportuni-

The Wilsonian Century

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY SINCE 1900

Frank Ninkovich

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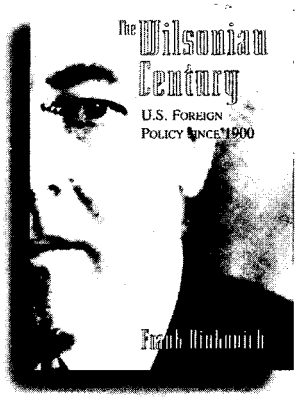

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—Lawrence E. Gelfand, University of Iowa

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ty. What he finds is a bed in a barrack, where a relief worker offers to teach him how to use a toilet. Another, Semir Khemmas, is an Iraqi raised in Kuwait. When Fritz meets Khemmas, he is studying computer science in Berlin. Khemmas "could be as Western as he wanted to be" and is ashamed of the refugees flooding Berlin, "the Gypsies and Yugos" who look vaguely like him. But with the onset of the Gulf War, he becomes one of them—banned from his home in Kuwait, unwilling to move to Iraq, and unable to stay in Germany.

Fritz is equally adept at chronicling the ways local communities respond to an influx of outsiders. Hannelore Gensch, an East German civil servant, wants to help the impoverished Gypsies she sees camping out at the train station. But she quickly becomes frustrated when she volunteers in a refugee home, where theft and violence are rampant. The townspeople of Breitenheerda are less hospitable when the government announces that abandoned barracks in the tiny German village of 300 will be converted to a shelter for 500 refugees. When the buses arrive, they lie across the road in protest. The most bizarre story involves a German mission to secret a busload of orphans out of Sarajevo. The driver, Herbert Puchwein, returns to Germany with the children and receives a hero's welcome. But as time passes, the war in Yugoslavia bogs down, and refugees continue to come knocking. Two years after they arrived, the orphans are put on a plane back to Sarajevo and deported.

And of course, the book would be incomplete without an appearance by Germany's bad and bald set. In some of his finest reporting, Fritz compares "professional skinheads" in Berlin (some of whom charge reporters for interviews or photos) with the movement's rank and file members. He spends an evening with a few of Dresden's angry youth, a half dozen "badly educated kids destined for second-class citizenship in a reconfigured country." Udo Ahrend is "a fun-loving thug." Maik Jacob is eager to explain why violence is the only way to make governments listen. Simone Kisza just wants to learn about New York, how the young people live in America, what music they like, what they wear, what clubs they go to.

Fritz's reporting is admirable, but his style takes some getting used to. *Lost on Earth* reads less like a book of reportage than it does oral history, or even historical fiction. Fritz removes himself from the book (occasionally, he is "an American reporter") in order to speak through his subjects. And whole chapters seem to be based on their recollections. When Kay Schaak, an engineer, tells a long, dramatic tale of his search for his family in war-torn Liberia, it is unclear whether or not Frtiz is reporting from the country. When 16-year-old Serena Mukagasana crouches in the bushes "on a cool spring evening" and watches Hutu gangs "disemboweling her schoolteacher inside a classroom where she once studied geography," the author might be in the bushes next to her, or he might be in a refugee camp in Berlin, thousands of miles away.

Fritz describes what his subjects see, hear, wonder, and fear in a novelistic voice that is occasionally unsettling. The approach works well enough when he is telling personal stories, since Fritz is sparing with quotes. But sometimes his chatty style clashes with the material, as when he is marching through political background. American pilots bombing Iraq "get close enough to see each little getaway car go boom." Fritz explains how Liberian president Sam Doe was executed by a gang of rebels who "just took Doe off somewhere, tied him to a chair, and among other things, offered him a snack that consisted of his own severed ear. Doe had about as much fun as a fish getting gutted."

Despite substantial flaws, *Lost on Earth* is an enjoyable read, not least because of Fritz's eye for details. Michaela Woike, an East German refugee, repeatedly soaks her handbag until she becomes accustomed to the automatic faucets in West German bathrooms. And Mary Lightfoot, an American relief worker from Florida, slowly learns the morbid wit of her coworkers in Somalia. (One of her hospital administrators waves a gun at her and tells her to go to his room immediately. But when she gets to his room, fearing for her life, he pours powdered milk in a blender and makes milkshakes.)

In the end, *Lost on Earth* is a much better book about Germany and the end of communism than it is about the broader trend of forced migration in the 1990s—hopelessly broad for one reporter to try and explain on a global scale, particularly with the kind of microscopic focus that Fritz ably provides. Many of its stories are profound and memorable. But taken as a whole, *Lost on Earth* is more collage than comparison. The big picture seldom comes into focus.

DOUGLAS MCGRAY *is associate editor at* Foreign Policy *magazine.*

The First Clinton

Kevin A. Swope

DEWITT CLINTON IS BEST remembered today for his tireless championing of the Erie Canal, undoubtedly the greatest feat of American engineering in the 19th century. It is a worthy memorial, but one that came near the end of a 40-year political career in New York that saw him nearly elected president in 1812. Evan Cornog, a historian and onetime press secretary for former New York Mayor Ed Koch, has written a brief but illuminating new biography of the man who at various times served as New York's mayor, governor, and U.S. senator.

DeWitt Clinton was clearly destined for great things from an early age. He was born in 1769 to a prominent (if not wealthy) New York family. He was the nephew of George Clinton, New York's long-serving governor, who became DeWitt's patron. Young DeWitt was enrolled as the first student in the newly reconstituted Columbia College. Clinton's upbringing instilled in him an attractive intellectual vigor and inquisitiveness, as well as an often-remarked-upon haughtiness and sense of entitlement.

Clinton's pretensions to mold America into a "New Rome" (the title of Cornog's book refers to this vision) earned him ridicule even in his own

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time, but his remarkable sense of self-confidence enabled him to recover from political reverses again and again. Clinton in many ways resembles his contemporary John Quincy Adams, who was likewise launched into a career of public service at an early age under the tutelage of a close relative. Like Adams, he was well-respected, but not particularly well-liked. Clinton rapidly ascended the political ladder, holding a variety of elected offices before attaining the then-appointive office of mayor of New York in 1803.

THE BIRTH OF EMPIRE
by Evan Cornog
Oxford University, $29.95

As mayor, Clinton's most lasting contributions were to the educational and cultural life of the city. While he saw great cities as the font of civilization and progress, Clinton also recognized them as "at all times the nurseries and hotbeds of crime." His solution was education, especially for the poorest segments of society, who were thought to be irreligious and therefore not served by the denominational schools.

Although his dream of universal public education was not realized until long after he had passed from the scene, his exertions in the area are impressive. Particularly striking is the inclusiveness of his vision—he supported schools for girls, free blacks, deaf and dumb children, even refugees from the Napoleonic Wars. He also sought to promote higher culture as president of the American Academy of the Arts and as a founder of the Literary and Philosophical Society and the New York Historical Society, although only the last has survived, if somewhat precariously, into the present day. Clinton himself dabbled in what was then known as "natural philosophy" as well as archaeology, and in some ways Clinton represents the last of the 18th century political leaders who, like Thomas Jefferson, drew their inspiration from the Enlightenment and the Old World. Clinton was indeed a Jeffersonian in politics, even if his belief in activist government did not quite square with Jefferson's oft-quoted ideal that the government that governs best governs least. His support of Jefferson, and his later alliance with Andrew Jackson, had as much to do with factional politics in New York as ideological affinity. In any case, his Republicanism helped to blunt charges of elitism and monarchism of the sort hurled against John Adams that might otherwise have found a ripe target in the sometimes pompous Clinton.

Although the Federalist faction in New York boasted such luminaries as Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, Clinton's bitterest political battles were not with Federalists but with the followers of fellow Republican Aaron Burr. Burr's supporters had miscalculated in their attempt to elevate him to the presidency over Jefferson in 1800, handing Clinton an opportunity to vanquish his rival. Bare-knuckled New York politics did not begin with Al D'Amato and Chuck Schumer—in 1802 Clinton's enemies accused him of membership in the "Columbian Illuminati," apparently a homegrown subsidiary of the more familiar Bavarian kind.

The Burrites further depicted him as an atheistic disciple of Tom Paine, who condoned incest and forced himself on the wives of those indebted to his family. Burr's political career ended, of course, when he fatally wounded Alexander Hamilton in a duel in 1804. Clinton had fought a similar duel with a Burr supporter two years earlier, but he proved a better shot than Hamilton, twice wounding his opponent before calling a halt to the proceedings.

Having secured his position in New York, Clinton set his sights on national office. In 1812, at the age of 43, he challenged the incumbent president, James Madison, a fellow Republican. It was a risky proposition—the country had just gone to war—but the administration's incompetence in managing the army and navy played in Clinton's favor. Clinton's attempt to forge a northern coalition of Federalists and anti-war Republicans nearly succeeded; had Pennsylvania gone the other way, the nation would not have had to wait another 180 years for a President Clinton. The seeming ease with which he made common cause with the Federalists undermined his position at home, and soon the Bucktail faction (under the leadership of Martin Van Buren) stripped Clinton of his offices one by one.

The instrument of Clinton's remarkable political rebirth was the Erie Canal. The idea of a canal linking the Hudson river with the Great Lakes had been kicking around for decades, and the legislature had chartered the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company in 1791 to build it. After 20 years, little progress had been made, however, and an attempt to seek federal financing failed. Clinton realized that the state was the only entity with the financial wherewithal to undertake such a monumental effort, and he made it his personal mission as head of the canal commission to see the project through to completion. As Cornog notes, the story of the Erie Canal is largely one of intended consequences. The canal was built in a timely fashion and revenues greatly exceeded costs, leading to the rapid development of upstate communities and contributing to the growth of New York as the nation's premier commercial port.

While acknowledging Clinton's weaknesses, Cornog is clearly an admirer of the man who, unlike any of his successors (including Cornog's former boss), turned the mayoralty of New York into a stepping stone to both statewide and national power. In rediscovering Dewitt Clinton, Cornog seeks to disprove the notion that activist government began with the two Roosevelts by recalling the ways in which Clinton used state power to better the lives of New Yorkers almost 200 years ago.

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Civics Lessons

by Timothy Noah

THOMAS GEOGHEGAN HAS written a book urging the rehabilitation of the civic idea in America that isn't the slightest bit

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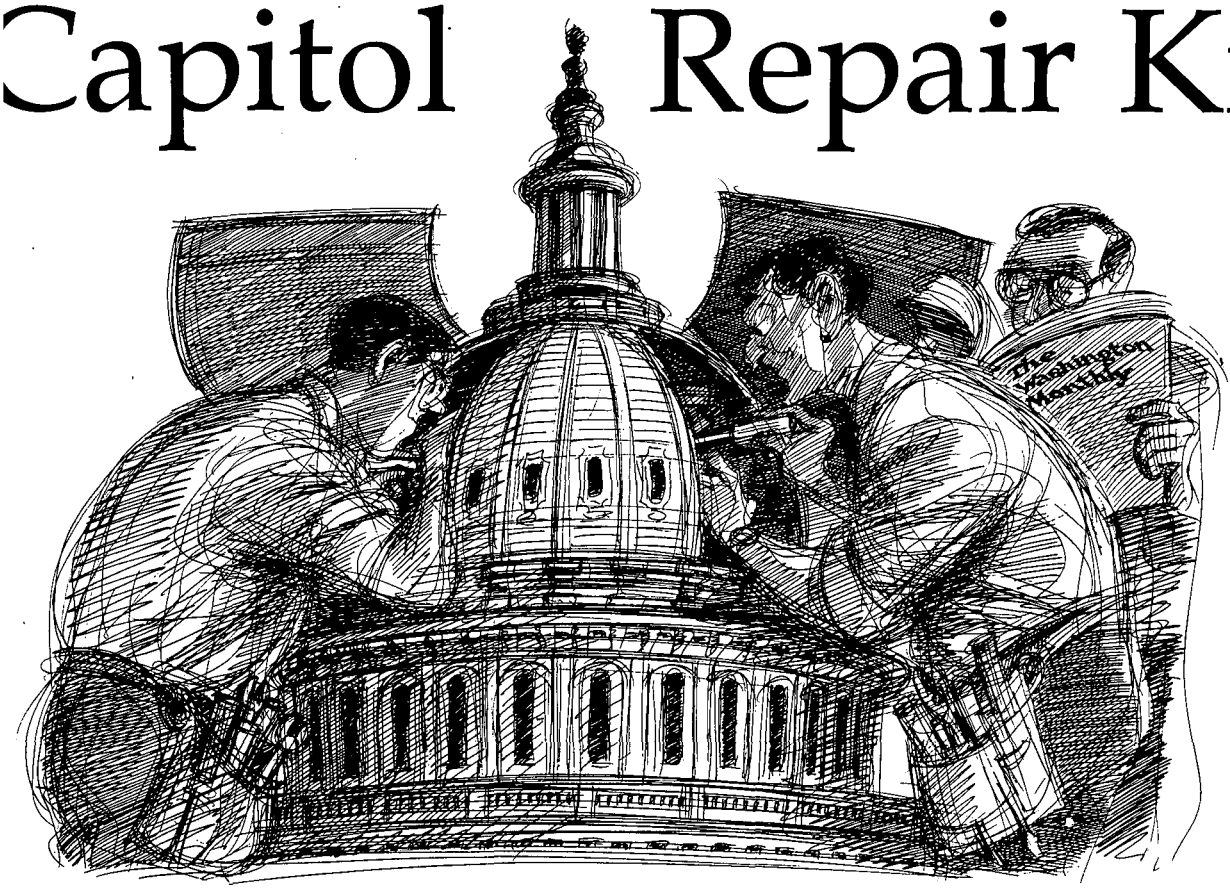

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boring, or pious, or given to bland generalization. That Geoghegan has achieved this won't surprise readers of his previous book, *Which Side Are You On?*, about his experiences as a labor lawyer during a decade (the 1980s) when the labor movement was all but extinguished. Like *Which Side Are You On?*, *The Secret Lives of Citizens* is a book that delivers its political and economic arguments with lyricism and a certain amount of humorous whining. If the monologist Spalding Gray were a Washington policy wonk, this is what he would sound like.

THE SECRET LIVES OF CITIZENS: Pursuing the Promise of American Life
by Thomas Geoghegan
Pantheon, $25

Readers are liable to take initial offense at the casual way Geoghegan drifts from discussing his dating life to discussing wage inequality, or low-income housing policy, or Chicago's inner-city tuberculosis epidemic. As *The Secret Lives of Citizens* progresses, however, one becomes increasingly aware that Geoghegan's life as a self-absorbed, trattoria-hopping baby boomer is entwined with his life as a political activist committed to improving the lives of the poor and lower middle class. Geoghegan may sound like a narcissist, but he is sincerely angry about his country's weak commitment to social justice, and deadly serious about finding a way to revive the spirit of the Progressive movement and the New Deal. (His book's subtitle is an allusion to *The Promise of American Life*, a famous Progressive tract written by *New Republic* founder Herbert Croly.) As a labor lawyer in Chicago, Geoghegan spends his days actually putting his ideals into practice—a point about which he simply refuses to be self-righteous. For Geoghegan, social justice is as much a personal quality-of-life issue as finding a good latte.

For the most part, *The Secret Lives of Citizens* is a series of anecdotes and pithy observations about what Geoghegan has observed in his lifelong quest to be a responsible citizen. But the book does follow a loose autobiographical structure, moving from Geoghegan's time as a young staff writer at *The New Republic* and then an aide in Jimmy Carter's Energy department, to his decision to move to Chicago and practice labor law, to his volunteer work for Mayor Harold Washington (whose death, Geoghegan argues, ended a glorious renaissance of the civic idea in Chicago), to his ruminations about getting married and moving to the suburbs (which—I don't think it will mar enjoying Geoghegan's sketchy narrative to reveal—he doesn't do). Geoghegan presents himself as an Everyman striving to find a role that connects him to the fate of his fellow citizens. The process probably isn't as muddled as his self-effacing prose makes it sound, but Geoghegan certainly can't be accused of flinching from the embarrassing details. When he brings suit, for example, against the Clinton Labor department to stop minors from working past midnight, his youthful plaintiffs prove impossible to keep corralled as they drop out of school and move on without a forwarding address. "I was in a panic," Geoghegan writes. "What if the government lawyers found out?" He loses the case.

It's immensely refreshing to read a book that overflows with new and unashamedly liberal ideas for strengthening the bonds of citizenship. Geoghegan spews them out like machine-gun fire: Here's a smart one, here's a screwy one, here's one that sounds like it may work, but maybe it won't. Mostly the ideas have the effect (and, presumably, the intention) of Swiftian modest proposals: They wake up the reader's sleeping conscience. Some really sting. For example, in the course of contemplating whether to adopt a child from Chicago's inner city, Geoghegan discovers that Cook County has increased terminations of parental rights from 958 in 1993 to 3,743 in 1997. Who is going to take care of all these kids? Perhaps we should "open up America (like China) to foreign adoption... We can leave the kids on the doorsteps of foreign hotels. Some countries in Europe have so much equality, or so little poverty, you could give the kids to people at random." Sure, Geoghegan says, "the U.S. is still the best for being Milken-like rich, or even the top third. But otherwise simply for 'moving up,' from the bottom to halfway up, Europe is better than America now." Geoghegan cites a 1994 *Business Week* story: "What are the chances for a Dane at the very bottom to move up? Nine out of ten. What are the chances for an American? One out of two. In which country would you drop your kid at random?"

The best thing in *The Secret Life of Citizens* is Geoghegan's critique of the U.S. Senate, where representation is so out of proportion to population as to be, in Geoghegan's mind, almost criminal. The problem is exaggerated by the filibuster, which, Geoghegan points out, was unknown to the Founding Fathers. Although its use even in the Jim Crow era was relatively infrequent, a Senate attempt in 1976 to "reform" it only made it easier to abuse. Where previously it had taken 66 senators to cut off debate, now it took only 40; but in exchange, the filibuster acquired a new respectability, and senators started using it routinely on bills that came to the Senate floor—and without having to engage in the round-the-clock rhetorical marathons familiar to anyone who's ever seen "Mr. Smith Goes To Washington." Geoghegan describes staying up, one hot and sticky Chicago night, and working out some numbers in front of a fan about how few people a filibustering Senate faction can represent. He tots up the states with the smallest population—Alabama, Alaska, and so forth—and calculates that if the 40 senators from these smallest states band together to block a Senate bill, in effect they can make 10 percent of the U.S. population call the shots for the other 90 percent. Moreover, "[e]ven without a filibuster, the 50 Senators from the 25 smallest states represent 16 percent of the population." That is, even under normal circumstances, 16 percent of the population can block a law—and just a bit more can pass one. "[S]ixty senators, and that's a landslide, from the thirty smallest states, represent a population, still, of only 24 percent." Although

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Geoghegan clearly would like to scrap the Senate altogether, he's willing to propose a few (slightly) less radical measures. One is to break up California and some other large existing states—at least for Senate-representation purposes—into two or three. Another (which I'm ready to sign onto right now) is to abolish the filibuster.

Obviously, Geoghegan's strength is exuberance and mordant wit rather than practicality. You wouldn't want this guy running the White House domestic policy council, not least because he has a winsome habit of proposing ideas and then almost immediately telling you how impractical or downright bad they are. On the other hand, at a moment when the republic is nearly choking on practical analysis that yields microscopic governmental solutions to large problems, the appearance of *The Secret Life of Citizens* is extremely well timed. If the White House domestic policy council—and, more important, a lot of citizens—were to read this book, it might stimulate the national imagination to think big again, just as it did during, well, the Progressive era and the New Deal. Less grandly, Geoghegan's book should be read simply because it's elegant and funny and sharply intelligent.

TIMOTHY NOAH *writes* Slate's *Chatterbox column and is a contributing editor for* George *and* The Washington Monthly.

Honest Paul

by Roger Simon

WHEN PAUL SIMON WAS elected to the Illinois legislature at age 25 (having been a newspaper publisher since age 19), he went to the state historical library in Springfield and asked for a book on Abraham Lincoln's years as an Illinois legislator. Informed that no such book existed, Simon wrote one. *P.S. The Autobiography of Paul Simon* is his 18th book and, like Simon himself, it is straightforward, plain-spoken and written in an amiable style that can sometimes obscure a more potent message.

P.S.
The Autobiography of Paul Simon
by Paul Simon
Bonus Books, $24.95

After 42 years in public office, including 10 years as a U.S. Representative, 12 as a U.S. Senator and one attempt to become president, Simon retired in 1996 with his reputation remarkably intact for being a liberal on social issues (his continuing stand against the death penalty officially makes him an Old Democrat), a fiscal conservative (he unsuccessfully led the fight for a balanced budget amendment), and a fighter against corruption.

His is a long story to tell and it takes a couple of hundred pages for him to leave the largely chronological recitation of his life and times and start taking Bill Clinton to task ("We are still too close to the Clinton presidency to make an evaluation. I hope it will end on a stronger note as he exits, but I am not optimistic."); the media (they pander to public taste, stress the trivial, are inattentive to international issues and are too cynical) and politicians ("Anyone in a major elected public office who tells you that he or she is not influenced by campaign contributions is either living in a dream world or is lying.").

Though the book begins in 1928 and goes on for seven decades, it does not attempt to offer a sweeping look at those years or make some overarching point. Instead, Simon (who is no relation to me) offers a series of peeks into his life that are like pearls on a string: His minister father just two months after Pearl Harbor preaches a sermon against the government for imprisoning Japanese-Americans (and 13-year-old Paul is embarrassed by it). As a painfully young newspaper publisher in Troy, Ill., he stands up to a local businessman and hires the first Jew ever to live in the town. He exposes corruption at home and throughout the state. And there is this beautifully understated passage when Simon, representing a racially segregated district in Southern Illinois but working hard for civil rights legislation in the state legislature, is invited by Martin Luther King Jr. to speak on the second anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott:

"I was a month and a half older than he, and the two of us 'hit it off' right from the start. At the Atlanta airport this distinguished leader and member of the clergy and I got off the plane and headed for the men's room. Suddenly I saw the signs: white and colored. I hesitated. He laughed, patted me on the back and said, 'This is not where we make our fight.' But I still remember the sudden crudeness of it, and I felt dirty after walking out of that men's washroom."

Simon was a peculiar amalgam of reformer and Democratic party regular: He cast votes that Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley did not like, but he never broke with the Daley machine that tightly controlled Democratic state politics. Simon's one political defeat came in 1972 when he lost the Democratic gubernatorial primary largely because citizens, hungry for exactly the kind of reform Simon was capable of delivering, were outraged that Simon had presented himself before Daley for a formal endorsement. (The man who beat Simon and went on to serve as governor later went to federal prison, "a sad ending to the career of a capable man," Simon writes graciously.)

Simon now heads the Public Policy Institute, which he founded at Southern Illinois University. He also teaches, does biweekly commentary on 10 NPR stations in Illinois and writes once a month for the internet magazine *Intellectual Capital*. To some he has always seemed a somewhat unemotional man, putting all his energies into looking for the next problem to solve or the next windmill to tilt at, which is why I liked a tiny aside in his book in which Barry Goldwater comes up to him in the Senate one day and asks him where Bowen, Ill., is. Simon, who prides himself on knowing every town in the state, had never heard of it. Goldwater said his mother had come from there. With typical resolve, Simon not only located it—near Quincy and with a population of 593—but had the Illinois Highway Department make up a sign that said: "Welcome to Bowen. The Home of Josephine Williams, the Mother of Senator Barry Goldwater." Simon gave the sign to the mayor of Bowen, had a

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picture taken of it and then presented it to Goldwater. Goldwater burst into tears. "I have to go to Bowen," Goldwater told Simon. They went together. "We drove in a parade, all six blocks of Bowen, and then he spoke to a gathering of about 300 people in the little town square telling them how much Bowen had meant to his mother," Simon writes. Three years later, Goldwater told Simon he wanted to give all his books to the Bowen library. Simon said he wasn't sure the town had one, but happily it turned out that it did and today those books are there.

Simon, an avid globe-hopper who believes legislators travel too little, not too much, crossed paths with virtually every major figure of his time and leaves out none of them: David Ben-Gurion, Anwar Sadat, Menachem Begin, King Hussein, Benjamin Netanyahu, Yasser Arafat, Margaret Thatcher, Helmut Kohl, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Chiang Kai-shek, Nelson Mandela, the list goes on. Such listing, which occurs throughout the book, is rescued, however, by the telling anecdote: Simon, a supporter of U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, plans to hold a press conference supporting him after Clinton opposes his retention. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright calls Simon the night before the press conference and asks him to call it off. She first tells Simon that Boutros-Ghali did not always do what the United States wanted, to which Simon replies: "I don't want a Secretary-General who does only what we want. That would diminish the constructive role of the United Nations." Albright then told him that when Boutros-Ghali ran, he promised to serve only five years. "Madeleine," Simon responded, "I can remember when a Governor of Arkansas ran for re-election and pledged that he would not run for President of the United States." Simon held the press conference.

ROGER SIMON *is a White House correspondent for the* Chicago Tribune.

Chocolate Wars

James Surowiecki

THE EMPERORS OF CHOCOLATE:
Inside the Secret World of Hershey and Mars
by Joel Glenn Brenner
Random House, $29.95

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO VERY far to find evidence that we live in a global economy. Just take a drive down to the local convenience store and pause in front of the register, where you'll see rows of a product whose raw material comes from South America, whose manufacturing and packaging takes place anywhere from Mexico to Pennsylvania, and whose marketing is now ubiquitous around the world. Yes, the candy bar is a multinational product par excellence.

But the candy bar—or, more accurately, chocolate—is also an American product par excellence. Aside from Coca-Cola and McDonald's, is there a more recognizable symbol of American consumer culture than the Hershey bar? From Lucy Ricardo stuffing her face with bon bons while working on the candy line to E.T. being lured from hiding with Reese's Pieces, candy has been an integral part of American pop culture. Americans even have different tastes in chocolate than much of the rest of the world, preferring Hershey's slightly sour milk chocolate to the more traditional European flavor.

All of this means that there's something inherently interesting about Joël Glenn Brenner's *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside the Secret World of Hershey and Mars*, an often entertaining but ultimately thin mix of business and cultural history. Brenner does an excellent job of tracing the separate stories of the two American candy powerhouses, Hershey and Mars. Her book is filled with sharply drawn anecdotes about candy making and candy eating, and she gives us convincing character studies of the two key figures in this history: Milton Hershey and Forrest Mars. In the end, though, the book comes up short in its understanding of American business, which is something of a problem for a book that's supposed to be about the competition between two companies. You walk away from *The Emperors of Chocolate* knowing a lot more than you thought you ever would know about chocolate, but not much more than you did about business.

Ironically, though, it's the business implications of this story that are the most interesting, and the most perplexing. In certain respects, after all, the contest between Hershey and Mars (who together control something like 75 percent of the U.S. candy market) is much like that between Coke and Pepsi, or for that matter between General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler. These companies' economies of scale and their superior marketing and sales strength allow them to muscle smaller competitors aside—you didn't think convenience stores just gave away the space underneath their registers, did you?—even as they remain locked in a *pas de deux* that's difficult to escape. An important part of this story, then, is the story of oligopolistic competition, and how having even one competitor is enough to keep a company on edge.

The more important part of this story, though, has to do with the fact that both Hershey and Mars are quite unusual corporations, since they are remnants of a day when businesses were family fiefdoms, and when outside attention was considered both unnecessary and undesirable. Mars, which was formed by the merger of two different companies—one started by Frank Mars, the other by his son Forrest—remains a privately-held firm owned and run by Forrest Mars' children. Not coincidentally, Mars is notoriously hostile to the press and even hesitant to give important information to the financial community. Hershey, for its part, is officially a public corporation, but it has been insulated from outside pressure by the fact that the Hershey Foundation owns a sizeable chunk of the company. In recent years, Hershey has tried to be more open with information about its core business, but its basic attitude toward Wall Street remains "the less said, the better." Needless to say, that attitude has not helped the company win the hearts of investors.

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Why should we care about the degree to which Mars and Hershey are and are not like other American corporations? Because their history runs counter to the current assumption that family-owned businesses are likely to be less efficient, less forward-thinking, and less profitable than public corporations.

Mars, for instance, which is the very definition of a family business—it's not really clear that the Mars brothers who run the firm even like their jobs, but they apparently work like dogs—seems to be run as rigorously as General Electric or Microsoft, with strict profit targets for each division and tight cost controls. Mars sells 15 percent of all the candy in the world, and although it still trails Hershey in domestic market share, it has been neck-and-neck with its chief rival since the 1970s. At the same time, although Brenner retails some hair-raising stories about Mars family members' martinet-like antics—screaming furiously at workers, demanding that every little change get their approval, etc.—the company is a model of what's often called "flat management." The company's CEO works at a desk like all the others on his floor, and there is no key to the executive washroom, because there is no executive washroom. As I mentioned above, Mars assembly-line workers are able to stop the production line, and managers' pay is linked to performance in a way guaranteed to make any shareholder smile (if there were any shareholders).

Hershey, on the other hand, is a public corporation, but often acts as if it isn't. Arguably, in fact, Hershey never really recovered from the death of its founder, Milton Hershey, in 1945. In the wake of World War II, for instance, Hershey had the opportunity, much as Coca-Cola did, to become a truly global brand, since its European competitors had been decimated and since anything American had an immediate competitive advantage. But the company simply failed to move aggressively into foreign markets, preferring instead to continue as it always had. Along the same lines, in the early 1970s Hershey, after decades of refusing to advertise, at long last began to advertise heavily. But as soon as economic turmoil hit, the company cut back on advertising and slashed costs. That helped protect the company in the short term, but in the long term it kept the company from mounting a significant challenge to Mars. Since then, Hershey has had occasional successes—Reese's Pieces being the most notable—but the company is increasingly out-of-step in the global economy. The fact that it has outside shareholders has simply not ensured its competitiveness. It's really a family business that happens to be run by non-family members.

Brenner is aware of the significant differences between Hershey and Mars, but seems to underplay them, perhaps in the interest of making the competition between the two companies seem more even than it is. And while she mentions the question of ownership, she doesn't try to draw out any broader conclusions from her story. So we're left with a fundamental but unanswered question: How is it that some family businesses are able to become bigger than the families that run them, while others remain essentially trapped by their pasts?

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The Next War

by Ernest Blazar

IT SEEMS THAT RETIRED ARMY Lt. Col. Ralph Peters could have had a great pitching career. I don't know if he's ever picked up a baseball, but the way he heaves rocks indicates a strong arm. Peters takes aim at a number of targets in *Fighting for the Future*, a collection of previously published essays. He unloads on the Pentagon, the State Department, the U.S. defense industry, and some intelligence experts who couldn't sleuth their way out of an overseas hotel lobby. In the process, he attempts to chart the likely global security landscape of the early 21st century and cattle prod the United States into being prepared for the challenges that lie ahead. He defends his tough rhetoric. "You must pound bureaucracies and not stop," Peters writes. "You have to grind them down."

FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE
by Ralph Peters
Stackpole, $19.95

Grind away he does. And like the over-the-top assaults of the First World War and the Chinese en-masse charges of the Korean war, Peters' thoughts and writing style could benefit from greater finesse and economy. Which isn't to say he is wholly ineffective. One benefit of attacking a target-rich environment—like America's sclerotic national security structures and habits—is the good fortune of being able to bayonet more than a handful of sacred cows. This Peters does with flourish and obvious delight.

"Our Department of State is a magnificent tool for dealing with symmetrically structured, like-minded entities—but what has it accomplished in Somalia ... in Bosnia ... in Africa's ruptured Gold Coast territories?" he asks. "Again and again, we find that hard-won treaties mean nothing because we negotiated them with governments that have only nominal authority while the true sources of local power are asymmetrical to our own... We are speaking Latin in the computer age."

Peters, who served as a foreign area expert while in uniform, has written a series of fictional books about the future security environment. He is a graduate of the Army's Command and General Staff College and traveled widely throughout the former Soviet Union during its implosive shakeup. In retirement he has made something of a career of jabbing a sharp stick at the Army.

During his fearless travels—this is a man who flew Aeroflot—Peters acquired a bleak view. America's enemy will come not clad in ceramic armor and the other trappings of a modern army. Nor is it an ascendant China or recidivist Russia. Rather, it exists in the various guises of Russian mobster, *narcotraficante*, terrorist, fundamentalist, treasury-looting financier, and Balkan nationalist. So vast and malevolent does Peters describe this group that it is as if the grotesqueries in Hierony-

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mous Bosch's triptych "The Garden of Earthly Delights" had come to life and occupied seats in the United Nations (a perspective undoubtedly shared by some U.S. ambassadors to that body). This loose cabal of international brigands will prey upon unfortunate nations—theirs and others—keeping a sizable portion of the world seething in its own misfortune. What is the United States doing to prepare itself for this? Besides comforting itself with Cold War-era diplomatic and military rituals that no longer suit the chaotic future, too damned little, in Peters' view. He says that U.S. diplomats' refusal to recognize the "fiction" of borders blinds us to the transnational threats freely breeding between time-zones. And when diplomacy fails and the U.S. military answers the call, our military is equally unprepared to rise to the occasion.

Not all of this is the military's fault, Peters hastens to add. Times have changed considerably from open contest between roughly symmetrical armies upon the even plains. Today, "there are often multiple warring parties, overlaid with civil factions, all interacting with multinational peacekeeping or peacemaking forces (often with radically different doctrines and agendas)." To appreciate his point one has only to review the countless extensions of the original 12-month U.S. military presence in Bosnia, or examine the empty strategy today masquerading as a blueprint for imminent U.S. involvement in Kosovo. The unanswered question is whether missions like these are the exception or the rule. Peters says get used to it; the future is already here.

That may be a hasty conclusion. Convinced of his own predictions, Peters often breathlessly imagines tomorrow's problems based on today's circumstances. This is the case, for instance, in his musings on urban warfare. "The future of warfare lies in the streets, sewers, high-rise buildings, industrial parks, and sprawl of houses that form the broken cities of our world," he writes. He goes on to conjure up a fantastical array of flying tanks and caterpillar-like machines that would navigate the sewer systems and ascend the skyscrapers of tomorrow's battlefields. Never mind that the cost of even distant relatives to the kinds of weapons he envisions would quickly deplete the Pentagon's account, leaving the nation unprepared for any other kind of war. Just imagine the circus-like Congressional hearings such plans would attract. The committee chairman bangs the gavel: "General, are you telling me that we should spend $10 billion of our precious taxpayer dollars on a troop-carrying armored caterpillar meant to go galloping up the side of skyscrapers...?"

The fact is that the world's cities are growing and may very well be the battlegrounds of the future. The key word here is "may." History is littered with one-way futurists who claimed the machine-gun, strategic bombing, or atom bomb, would win or end all wars. Caution instructs us that strategic flexibility is the way to go, not strategic specialization.

Peters clearly has a fertile imagination—one that, on balance, hits more worthy targets than it misses. At times, though, he succumbs to the same problem that often plagues fighter pilots. Called "target lock," it means that the aggressive pursuit of a target can often blind the pursuer to everything else in his field of vision. For pilots, it can mean chasing another plane right into the ground. For Peters, it's fatal only to some of his arguments, but puts at risk others he makes well.

In his concluding chapter, for instance, Peters says that the promise of military technology—which he trashes in its current form as little more than Pentagon pork—will give the United States the ability to construct a constellation of weapons that will be able to instantly destroy the weapons of any offending nation. We must stop buying "big-ticket weapons," like nuclear-powered attack submarines, he insists, and invest in the weapons he predicts offer the most promise. But he misses that some Cold War weapons are, in fact, well-suited to defend against future threats. Take the Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar, which can simultaneously keep an eye on hundreds of suspect targets moving on the earth's surface. Or the Navy's tentative plan to swap the nuclear-tipped missiles aboard four Ohio-class submarines with hundreds of Tomahawks, like those used against renegade Saudi terrorist Osama Bin Ladin. The Pentagon is reorienting toward a post-Cold War future, but it will never do so quickly enough to satisfy all.

Ralph Peters' entertaining predictions and prescriptions serve as useful signs of how maddening it is for the world's sole remaining economic, cultural and military superpower to peer into the 21st century with little clue as to what's to come. And if America's Army was able to produce—or even tolerate—the unbridled intellectual energy of a soldier like Ralph Peters, then perhaps, the challenges that will test America in the next century are not as steep as his book would have us believe.

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Future Shocked

by Elise Ackerman

IT TOOK YEARS OF PLEADING before writer Alex Heard finally convinced pod-owner Bob Hieronimus to let him have a look around his underground bunker. Anticipating the coming apocalypse, Hieronimus constructed the refuge deep beneath his home, somewhere in the vicinity of Baltimore. (The address is cloaked to throw off would-be marauders.) Heard takes in the giant boxes of Tampons, the 40 bunk beds, the stockpiles of canned goods, the escape hatch. But he needs more visceral input, so he asks Hieronimus to let him crawl through the hatch. Inside, Heard inhales the scent of raw dirt and mildew and lays a hand on the cool metal. Closure at last, he thinks.

After a decade poking around wacky American beliefs in future earth changes, extraterrestrial visits, and other assorted phenomena, it is no wonder that Heard developed a need to check things out for himself. A reporter turned magazine editor, Heard ponders "revelation physics" and immerses himself in esoteric texts, wiggling both his body and his

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mind through elaborately constructed responses to the end of the millennium. The result is both a meticulous catalogue of social dysfunction and a riveting travelogue of the wellsprings of American faith and inventiveness.

This is a guide to an America where human beings are as easily matched up with "Space Brothers" as they are with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, where a vengeful earth deity is in control, and perpetual motion and eternal life are one simple scientific discovery away. While such beliefs are easily mocked, it is instructive to remember that polls show that most Americans—that is mainstream, Super Bowl-watching, 401K-investing Americans—are convinced of the possibility of extraterrestrial life. Most believe in angels and many think that Christ will return in their lifetimes. Given the short distance between acceptable and far-out spiritual views, the conviction of many people that these are the Last Days can be troubling, especially when they arm themselves in anticipation of violent upheaval. The big question is: Should we worry?

One weakness of this rollicking account of millennial enthusiasms is that Heard deliberately steers clear of the most dangerous fringe elements. Authorities consider groups like Christian Identity a real threat. Heard halfheartedly tries to contact one such group and quickly gives up. The vast majority of the believers he meets are reassuringly mired in banality. A would-be leader of the Branch Davidians seeking to step into the shoes of David Koresh gripes that his followers are unable to decide on pizza toppings. At a "friendship renewal" ceremony held by Unarians—a group awaiting contact from super-intelligent space brothers—participants recall past lives of wanton violence. The reason for these bloody testimonials? Distress over common foibles like unemployment, envy, weight gain, and masturbation.

It is probably asking too much to expect Heard to identify the next Aum Supreme Truth, especially when the alternative he offers to earnest warnings and dire predictions is so much more amusing. And as he amply demonstrates, many of these endearing, obsessed, narcissistic oddballs are no stranger than the man next door, and, one might assume, no more threatening. (Barring the unforeseen event that the man next door turns out to be Charles Manson, that is.) Their bizarre world views, as experienced by Heard, can be understood as all-too-human responses to death, meaninglessness, boredom, loneliness, and failure.

The therapeutic aspect of the millennial groups can be explicit. For example, a leader of the Earth Changes movement lectures on "12 steps" to the aftertime—an odd coda to the movement's creed that an angry earth mother will kill off most of the planet during the next few years. The apocalypse can be forestalled, it turns out, if human beings start to behave better, if they are nice to each other and to the planet. "That sounded awfully wee—the Four Horseman of the Inner Child?" Heard muses. But, as he points out, it makes sense.

Indeed, the notion of the millennium as therapy may explain why so many way-out beliefs are being embraced by the mainstream. In the short span of time since Heard finished his book, pods have proliferated. No less august a body than the U.S. Senate is advising people to stockpile water and canned goods in order to be prepared for year 2000 computer glitches. Now everyone can experience the cathartic thrill of anticipating a disaster. Insiders—those with an esoteric faith or an E.T. connection—can congratulate themselves on being both prepared and in the know.

And if disaster never comes, they can take credit for that, too. What could be more American than self-improvement, mixed with rugged individualism, as a means of world redemption?

ELISE ACKERMAN *is a senior editor at* U.S. News and World Report.

APOCALYPSE PRETTY SOON: Travels in End-Time America
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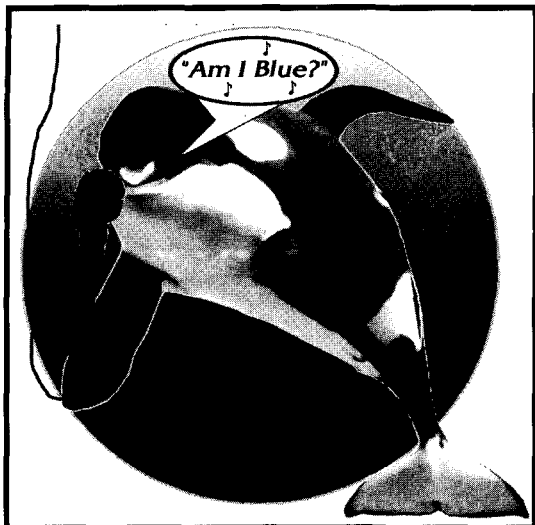

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[illegible]aliban Infiltrates [illegible]erican Politics...

[illegible] State Rep. Sam [illegible] proposed a bill that [illegible]quire hospitals to [illegible]ditional gowns with [illegible] "dignity gowns". [illegible]gue, Rep. Jerry King, [illegible] with the need for [illegible] after having back [illegible] himself, saying, [illegible]thing stuck out on me."

God Hires William-Morris

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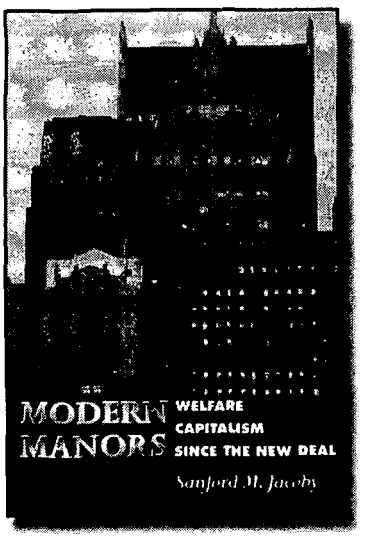

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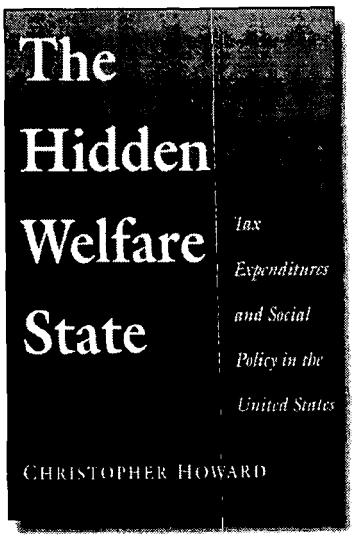

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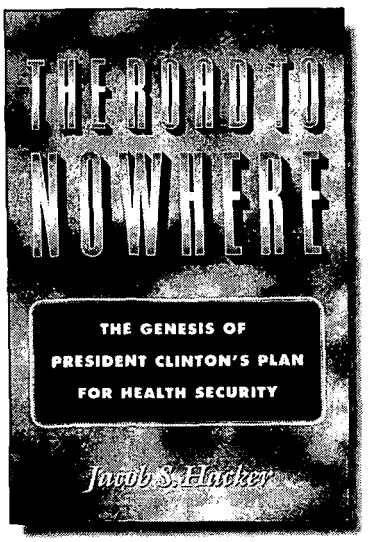

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